

**KLEIN: JOHN EDWARDS &
THE POPULIST MOMENT**

**THRUPKAEW: ARTISTS VS.
COMMISSARS IN SAIGON**

**ZELIZER: HOW CONGRESS
ENDED THE VIETNAM WAR**

THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

**WILL GLOBAL CAPITALISM
DEMOCRATIZE CHINA?
DON'T COUNT ON IT.**

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

BY JAMES MANN

MARCH 2007

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THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

VOLUME 18 • NUMBER 3 MARCH 2007

*"The Congress shall have Power ...
To declare War ... To make Rules for
the Government and Regulation
of the land and naval Forces"*

— THE CONSTITUTION OF THE
UNITED STATES, ARTICLE 1, SECTION 8

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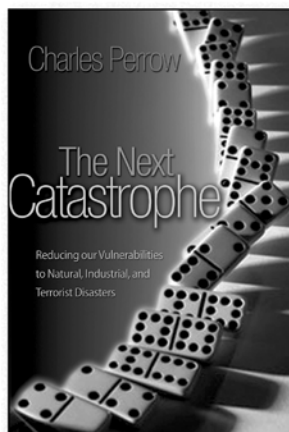
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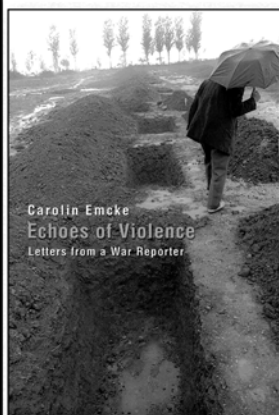
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Congressional Battleground

CAN THE PUBLIC MAKE ITS WILL FELT THROUGH Congress and start the difficult process of bringing closure to the Iraq War? Although the voters spoke last November, the administration has seen no need to listen. But the prospect of another defeat in 2008 may

motivate enough Republicans in Congress to break with the administration on the war—and by acting strategically the war's opponents and the Democratic leadership can help make that happen.

It is a frightening thought that however little confidence they enjoy, George W. Bush and Dick Cheney will be in the White House for nearly two more years. About Iraq, nothing changes their minds—not the overwhelming evidence of the failure of their policies, not the bipartisan Iraq Study Group headed by James Baker, not the opposition of top generals, and certainly not the collapse of support for the war in public opinion.

And as if being mired in Iraq were not bad enough, we now have abundant and growing reason for concern that President Bush will widen the war by ordering a U.S. air strike against Iran, or that he will fail to restrain Israel from launching an attack.

Congress is our only possible check on a president's war powers, and there is ample legal foundation and historical precedent for it to act. Knowing that Congress will be reluctant to cut off funds for troops in the field, conservatives often argue that its authority is limited to the power of the purse. But as Professor David J. Barron of Harvard Law School told a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on January 28, the Constitution "confers upon Congress an

impressive array of war powers that are not tied to its general appropriations power (for example, the power 'to make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces')."

Congress ought to use its full authority to bring the Iraq War to a close and to make unmistakably clear what the Senate majority leader, Harry Reid, said on January 19: "The President does not have the authority to launch military action in Iran without first seeking congressional authorization—the current use of force resolution for Iraq does not give him such authorization."

Yet short of 60 votes in the Senate—indeed, with their majority of 51 hinging on the tenuous support of Joseph Lieberman—the Democrats alone cannot compel a change in policy. So is all the talk of congressional resolutions to end or limit the war mere posturing? It may look that way. But the discussions this winter are more likely a rehearsal for a historic debate and confrontation with the president over his war powers to come later this year or early next.

Last fall the voice of sober realism counseled that it was highly unlikely, if not impossible, for the Democrats to recapture both houses of Congress.

That cautious view underestimated the strength of public dissatisfaction with Bush's policies. No one ought to make that mistake a second time.

Although Bush may now be free to ignore the electorate, 21 of the 49 Republicans in the Senate and all of those in the House have to face the voters in 2008. There are already signs of election-driven GOP defections. Of the seven Republican senators who signed John Warner's letter calling for a debate on the troop surge, four others in addition to Warner are up for reelection next year: Norm Coleman of Minnesota, Susan Collins of Maine, Gordon Smith of Oregon, and Chuck Hagel of Nebraska.

The efforts to limit the war need three or four additional defections, most likely from Republicans who may soon begin to see their own careers in peril if the fiasco in Iraq continues. These could include John Sununu of New Hampshire, Elizabeth Dole of North Carolina, and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee. If the Democratic tide in 2008 threatens to reach tsunami-like proportions, even a Republican thought to have a safe seat, such as Pete Domenici of New Mexico, could feel the heat.

The outcome of the fight in Congress may depend on the ability of the Democrats to come up with strong challengers in states where GOP senators are vulnerable and on the ability of the war's opponents in those states to make their presence felt. In recent presidential elec-

tion years, liberal groups have focused on critical battleground states such as Ohio. This time they may also need to focus on states with crucial swing votes in the Senate.

The way out of Iraq is not going to be easy, but the decision must be made. And if it is not to wait until 2009, only Congress can force the issue. **TAP**

— PAUL STARR

*The debate
over the war
in Congress
this winter
is likely just
a rehearsal.*



*We do not need
to compromise
on national
health care
NOW.*

— MARILYN CLEMENT
HEALTHCARE NOW

Vote for Klein

I FOUND EZRA KLEIN'S article ["Strategic Two-Fers," December 2006] to be an excellent, logical, and well-written article. However, under the paragraph heading "Voting Reform," one now proven reform was completely overlooked. I refer to the Oregon "all-vote-by-mail system." This is a cheaper system, it results in greater voter participation, it is devoid of fraud and abuse, it gives the voter more time to consult resources on each issue before making his/her ballot, and recounts are easily undertaken in contested cases. Electronic voting machines with no paper trail should be made illegal nationwide immediately. Improvements in our voting and voter registration procedures must be made before the next election in 2008!

GERALD V. MANN
Medford, OR

Wes Hangs Tough

I READ WITH GREAT INTEREST and appreciation Matthew Yglesias' article, "Smears for Fears," [www.prospect.org/smears] because I am both a supporter of Wes Clark for president,

and a Jew who, like Yglesias, does not want the United States to bomb Iran. I agree with most of what he wrote.

[But] to say that Clark selected his words so as not to be branded an anti-Semite assumes that [Clark] really was talking about Jewish influence in American politics. I do not assume that "New York money people" must equate to Jews. In my neck of the woods, "New York money people" means rich New Yorkers. Many of them are Jewish, of course, but most are not. So I don't believe Clark's expression was odd or that his intent was to disguise his meaning.

I also strongly disagree that Clark "backed down" from anything he had said before. If you read Clark's exact words in his letter to [Anti-Defamation League National Director, Abraham] Foxman, he merely clarified that his words should not be construed to mean he supports conspiracy theories that Jews control U.S. foreign policy. Clark went on to assert that we cannot, and he will not, let those theories block the honest debate on how the United States should deal with Iran, which he claims is with dialogue first and a

military option ONLY as an absolute last resort.

JAI JOHNSON-PICKETT
Stilwell, KS
Lieutenant Colonel,
U.S. Army (retired)

Anti-Incrementalism

WHILE "BY THE SLICE," [www.prospect.org/slice] by Mathew Yglesias had many good points about how to compromise on national health care, his assumption is wrong. We do not need to compromise NOW. The time for compromise is a long way down the line.

Right now, the task is to push Congress to hold hearings on H.R. 676, the only single-payer national health care bill in the House, the bill that has almost 50 co-

sponsors already since it was reintroduced [January 24], [and] the only bill that will save the tax payers money, not add to the deficit. In fact, it is the only bill that can pass muster under the new pay/go rules.

MARILYN CLEMENT
National Coordinator,
Healthcare-NOW

Correction: Harold Meyer-son's "The Populist Persuasion" [December 2006] referred to a study by the Citizens Trade Watch. The study was conducted by Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.

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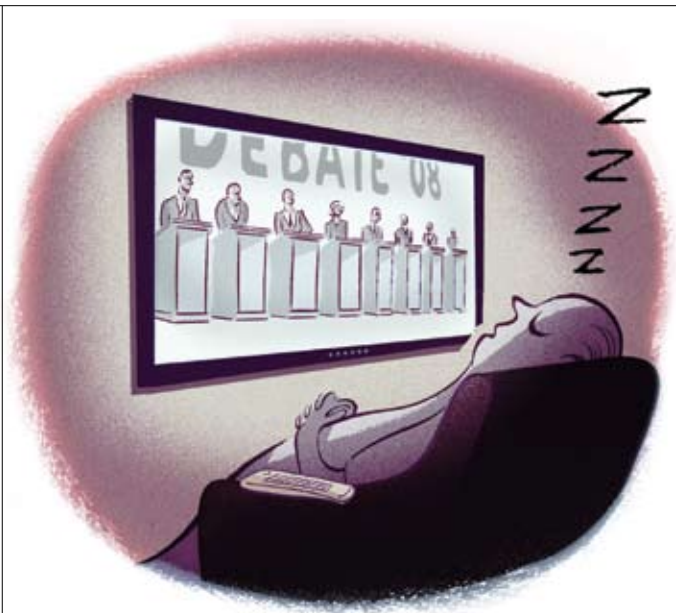
FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

WE'RE MISSING A SECTION IN THIS ISSUE, AND IT'S BY design. Our Dispatches section—the shorter news stories that preceded our feature stories for the better part of the past decade—is no more. More precisely, we're moving our more topical stories to our ever expanding Web site, www.prospect.org, which already was home to some of the most provocative, thoughtful, and irreverent debates, columns, and articles around, and is now going to be home to some of the most trenchant reporting on events of the day as well.

The move also enables us to expand the space we devote to our feature stories. In this issue, veteran East Asia hand James Mann documents why China's conversion to capitalism by no means guarantees its conversion to democracy. Noy Thrupkaew contributes a very different piece—a snapshot of Saigon's ultra-hip artists colliding with Vietnam's ultra-square commissars—that, like Mann's, concludes that liberalizing the economy doesn't necessarily liberalize much else. Ezra Klein profiles the existential depth and political possibilities of John Edwards' populism; historian Julian Zelizer recounts what exactly Congress once did to end the Vietnam War; and *Prospect* co-editor Bob Kuttner calculates just how big a safety net we'd need to ensure American workers against the ravages of globalization. (Hint: Real big.) Happy reading!

— HAROLD MEYERSON

Up Front



A CANDIDATE IN EVERY POT

LET'S SEE, NOW: ON THE DEMOCRATIC SIDE, THERE'S Hillary Clinton, Chris Dodd, John Edwards, Mike Gravel, Dennis Kucinich, Barack Obama, Bill Richardson, and Loose-Lips Joe Biden, with Wesley Clark and just maybe Al Gore waiting in the wings. For the Republicans, there's Sam Brownback, James Gilmore, Rudy Giuliani, Mike Huckabee, Duncan Hunter, John McCain, Ron Paul, Mitt Romney, Tom Tancredo, and Tommy Thompson, with Chuck Hagel and just maybe the Newtster himself waiting to pounce.

Imagine, if you dare, the candidate debates coming up. If I remember my Greek architecture right, the reason the Parthenon had eight columns in front was that the Greeks had figured that no one could apprehend more than eight things in a row. Athens may have fallen, but the rule still goes. Giving 12 candidates equal time in a two-hour debate, allowing a scant 15 minutes for introductions, reading the rules, and posing questions, means allotting just eight minutes and 45 seconds to each candidate to actually talk. Scarcely worth showing up, whether you're a candidate or (especially) a spectator.

Here's a plan for the debates during primary season: Pair these guys off, as they do in tennis tournaments. Who knows? Attend a debate, and you may get Clinton vs. Obama. Then again, you may get Gravel vs. Gilmore. What stories you'd have for your grandchildren!

— HAROLD MEYERSON

RACE-BASED GOP

Reassuring news: Immigrant-bashing Republican Congressman Tom Tancredo isn't spending all his valuable time running for president. He's still concerned with the workings of Congress, and recently sent a note to the House Administration Committee demanding the abolition of the Congress' race-based caucuses—chiefly, the Congressional Black Caucus and the Democrats' Hispanic Caucus. Lamentably, he didn't include his own party: After all, the entire Republican congressional delegation appears to the naked eye to be race-based—the race in question, of course, being white. 48 of the 49 GOP senators are white, while 199 of the 202 GOP representatives are (non-Hispanic) white, too. There's not a single black Republican in either chamber. In the spirit of grand bargains, we might entertain the abolition of the black and Hispanic caucuses if the Republicans are willing to chuck their party. Deal?

SHAKY FOUNDATIONS

Who could object to a new Museum of Tolerance? In 2004, the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center announced it would erect a version of its museum in the heart of Israeli West Jerusalem, designed by Frank Gehry himself. The digging commenced—only

to stop when it began turning up human skeletons. Turns out the site had been a Muslim cemetery dating back to the 13th century, and active at least until the 19th century. Muslim tradition has it that associates of the Prophet Muhammad are buried there (no less likely, when you think about it, than Abraham being interred in Hebron). Center and Jerusalem city officials argue that Muslims paid no heed to the site before the current incident, but in January, Israel's High Court of Justice ordered the city and the center to explain why it should permit the construction to continue. The tolerance of Tolerance remains to be seen.

AL-PROSPECT

Dinesh D'Souza, the Rishwain Research Scholar at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, has a new book out. It's called *The Enemy at Home: The Cultural Left and Its Responsibility for 9/11*. (See our D'Souza-related quiz on the next page.) As befits a credentialed scholar, the author is careful to define his terms. Regarding the titular "enemy," he offers up a list of about a hundred, "a roster of people and groups that deserve the label of domestic insurgents"—i.e. those seeking to assist Osama bin Laden in achiev-



ERIC PALMA; DIXIE D'SOUZA

**THE QUESTION:
ANY NOTICEABLE
CHANGES IN HILL LIFE
SINCE THE DEMS
TOOK OVER?**

"After 12 long years of feeling like the Maytag repairman, I can finally legislate on behalf of working families throughout America."

—Rep. Pete Stark,
(D-CA)

"Our nation's first female House Speaker, a Democratic majority, more women in leadership positions—it's all noticeable."

—Rep. Loretta
Sanchez, (D-CA)



"We could finally pass legislation to take the spotted owl off the Senate cafeteria menu."

—Sen. Ron Wyden,
(D-OR)

ing victory over George Bush in the war on terrorism. *Prospect* readers should take heart in the knowledge that we are, indeed, doing our part for the cause: Two of our co-founders, Paul Starr and Robert Reich, made the cut, though, frustratingly, editors Robert Kuttner, Harold Meyerson, and Michael Tomasky all got snubbed.

Meanwhile, others who made the list include Paul Begala, Senator Jack Reed, and Mumia Abu-Jamal. (The writer Thomas Frank is, for some reason, listed twice.) As insurgencies go, this seems like an awfully motley crew, but who are we to dispute the findings of a kinda-sorta Stanford scholar?

WARMED OVER

President Bush has always been concerned about global warming—you knew that, right? On February 7, following the release of a big new UN report on climate change, two White House flunkies, Office of Science and Technology Policy Director John Marburger and Council on Environmental Quality Chair James Connaughton, released a letter making just this claim. "[C]limate change has been a top priority since the President's first year in office," they wrote. "Beginning in June 2001, President Bush has consistently acknowl-

edged climate change is occurring and humans are contributing to the problem." As *Prospect* senior correspondent Chris Mooney pointed out on his blog, the evidence offered up by the two amounted to a few comically cherry-picked quotes misconstruing the intended meaning of Bush's words. Bush was saying *as recently as June* that "there is a debate over whether [global warming]'s man-made or naturally caused."

The debate over Bush's views on global warming was surely resolved a long time ago.

BAKED CABERNET

Meanwhile, if even the president is now trying to rewrite his own history on global warming, we take it that America's elites have basically gotten the message on the issue. But just in case they haven't: The rising temperatures in California are threatening the wineries of Napa Valley. Currently,

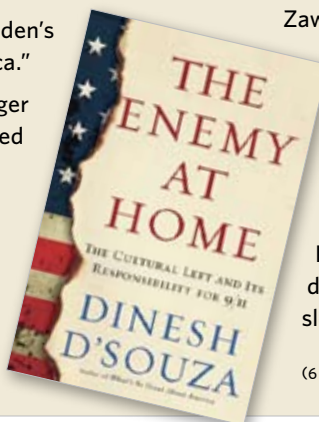
the average temperature in Napa is 64. Even a one degree rise would doom its chardonnay, according to a report in insidebayarea.com. A degree or two more might wipe out the merlot, syrah, and (gasp) cabernet, though the zinfandel apparently could handle the heat. And as Napa goes, so, for all we know, goes France. Hence, the wine-lovers' battle cry: If you want your café standards, raise those CAFE standards.

PARODY

Dinesh D'Souza—Beyond Parody?

Find out by taking our quiz! Below are seven real quotes from his new tome, *The Enemy at Home: The Cultural Left and Its Responsibility for 9/11*, along with three fake ones. Whoever can spot all three ringers gets a fellowship at the Hoover Institution.

1. "Islamic radicals like bin Laden, who once considered 'America' the enemy, have come to recognize the left as a crucial ally."
2. "The left wants America to be a shining beacon of global depravity, a kind of Gomorrah on a Hill."
3. "To paraphrase the Beatles, Islamic terrorists get by with a little help from their left-wing friends."
4. "The left is serving as bin Laden's public relations team in America."
5. "The United States is no longer united; one side seems dedicated not to defeating the Islamic radicals but to defeating the United States."
6. "If you want to understand liberal family values, a good place to start is the Abu Ghraib scandal."
7. "Americans may find it hard to see the connection between our no-fault divorce laws and our vulnerability to terrorism, but it is hardly lost on the terrorists themselves."
8. "Undoubtedly torture can be misused, but then the criticism should focus on those misuses."
9. "On the enemy's side, if bin Laden can be considered the commander in chief and Zawahiri the secretary of defense, Michael Moore could surely qualify as press secretary."
10. "In short, the left is the domestic insurgency that provides a counterpart to the Iraq insurgency. It is at least as dangerous as any of bin Laden's sleeper cells."



(ANSWERS: 3, 7, 9)

Six and Two

BY MARK SCHMITT

WHEN I WAS IN COLLEGE, DURING RONALD REAGAN'S "Morning in America," I had a classmate who is the person I always think of when I try to imagine the young George W. Bush. (Although the comparison is terribly unfair to this person, since unlike Bush, he has

considerable accomplishment to show for his first 45 years on this planet.) This guy had a little motto, typical of the privileged-punk campus conservatism that was then just taking hold, and that would dominate the next two decades: "U.S.A!," he would declare, pumping a fist in the air, "We're five and one in major wars!"

I'm not sure how he derived the tally (I think the War of 1812 is considered a draw), but it was actually kind of sweetly ironic. After all, the "one"—the defeat—was the most recent and very much a presence at that time. Ours was not the Vietnam generation, but we were close enough to it that our camp counselors, when we were kids, could tell us their draft numbers and our cool young professors had gone to grad school for roughly the same reasons Dick Cheney did.

I've been thinking about this recently because—can we please just say it—we're six and two now. All the current debate about the escalation in Iraq, about the idea that we're in some sort of "existential" struggle with a shape-shifting enemy, and even about some of the alternatives is just a collective effort to play for overtime, to forestall that final declaration. (If we attack Iran, on the other hand, we could quickly go to six and three and miss the global hegemony play-offs.)

Sports metaphors capture the attitude that led us to where we are today. When

the Bush White House, desperate but unserious, declares that "failure is not an option," theirs is the certainty of a football coach exhorting his players at halftime when they're down 28 points. At the end, unthinkable as it may be, the privilege of being the United States.—as opposed to, say, Russia or Germany—is that we can lose wars, put them in the record books and move on.

But if losing the war is not quite the existential crisis that the advocates of escalation make it seem, it is also not as casual as the sports-score attitude that led us into it suggests. The years following the Iraq loss will be no easier than the decade after the loss in Vietnam. And the problems won't be confined to the war's aftermath. There will be the consequences of our fiscal irresponsibility, a deepening energy crisis, climate change, and the social fissures created by wide inequality and middle-class insecurity.

We don't know what the Iraq War hangover is going to feel like, which is why we want to put it off. It might feel like the mood Jimmy Carter described in his 1979 "malaise" speech: "growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and ... the loss of a unity of pur-

pose for our nation." Or it might be a moment when the political alignments as we've known them begin to break down, when the politics of empty symbolism gives way to a politics of problem solving, when a humbled country makes a fresh start.

That will depend on whether the first president of post-war America will be able to do better than Carter at finding the language and vision that makes that fresh start possible. It sometimes seems that even Democrats who are most outspoken about the need to bring the war to a quick close are naive about the world that follows. Since the 2006 election, Democrats have often behaved as if we're just waking up from a long dream and it's 1993 again. Whatever we did wrong back then, we'll just go back and fix it. So we often seem to be revisiting the arguments of the Clinton years: the relative importance of deficit-reduction and public investment, the health-care fight, the decisions that led to the North American Free Trade Agreement. The front-running Democratic candidate is employing the very slogans ("If you work hard and play by the rules ...") and strategists of the winning campaigns of the 1990s.

But there's no turning back. The United States in 2009 will be deeply different than the United States in 1993. Losing a war will be one part of it, but not the whole thing. This is a different country demographically, economically, politically. Leadership in 2009 will have to begin from the realities, the profound limits, and possibly the new possibilities of this moment, not the past.

And if we do it right, a decade later, someone will declare it "Morning in America" again, and some affluent college student somewhere will pump his fist and declare, "We're six and two!"

But we'll know better than to put him in charge. **TAP**

*Bush's is the
certainty of a
coach exhorting
his players when
they're down
by 28 points.*

Settlement Creep

BY GERSHOM GORENBERG

AT FIRST GLANCE, IT SEEMED LIKE GOOD NEWS: In January, Israeli Defense Minister Amir Peretz froze plans for a new settlement in the West Bank, partly in response to U.S. objections. Just a few weeks before, Peretz had given the go-ahead for the establishment of

Maskiot, the first new settlement to win Israeli government approval in more than a decade. It was intended for 30 Israeli families evacuated from the Gaza Strip in August 2005, and it was to be built in the barren hills above the Jordan River. Announcement of the plan brought a sharp protest from Washington.

"The U.S. calls on Israel to meet its road-map obligations and avoid taking steps that could be viewed as predetermining the outcome of final-status negotiations," a State Department spokesman said, referring to George W. Bush's 2003 "road map" for peace, which required Israel to stop settlement growth.

Reports credited U.S. opposition as a key reason for the proposal's demise. Skimming news Web sites, you might construct this encouraging picture: Israel decided to renew settlement expansion; the move was testimony to how countries can continue with failed policies, since Israel's leaders have acknowledged that national interests require giving up West Bank land and allowing a Palestinian state; fortunately, the Bush administration forthrightly voiced America's disapproval; diplomatic pressure worked. Let's celebrate.

Please don't. The Maskiot affair amounted to slapping a mosquito while ignoring a mammoth. Official Israeli approval of a new settlement was an isolated incident, mainly symbolic in impact. By every actual measure, the Israeli settlement enterprise in the West Bank keeps growing. Driven by Prime Minister Ehud

Olmert, and Ariel Sharon before him, the settlement bulldozer has consistently ignored the American road map.

Israel's settler population grew by nearly 6 percent in 2006, to a total of more than 268,000, as existing settlements continued to expand. Meanwhile, the government called for bids last year for more than 950 new apartments in established settlements. This January, the Israeli housing ministry asked for bids to build another 44 homes in Ma'alach Adumim, the largest settlement.

While the government stopped approving new settlements in the wake of the 1993 Oslo Accords, settlers have since established more than 100 "outposts"—hilltop clumps of mobile homes—with bureaucrats either helping or looking the other way. Following the road map, Israel was supposed to evacuate some outposts. Peretz, leader of the center-left Labor Party, has promised to remove outposts since becoming defense minister last year. But he has lacked the will, or the backing from Olmert, to do so. On the hilltops, permanent houses are replacing the mobile homes.

Olmert's public position is that to maintain a Jewish majority, Israel must give up most of the West Bank. Nonetheless, he promises to hold on to the largest

settlements, and he continues building there. His policy defies his own logic. But cold analysis isn't enough to stop the momentum of historical habits.

The sole excuse for U.S. ineptitude is that it is an old habit, too. Since the Six Day War, successive U.S. administrations have favored a full Israeli-Arab peace based more or less on the pre-1967 borders. Since 1967, Washington has objected to settlement—but softly, without exerting leverage. The post-1967 paper trail in U.S. archives shows American diplomats endlessly finessing the language of successive peace initiatives, while Israeli governments wrote their real policy in roads and houses in occupied territory.

Still, George W. Bush's failure on the settlement issue manages to create nostalgia for his father. George Bush Senior was the exceptional president who exerted strong U.S. pressure by conditioning American loan guarantees to Israel on a settlement freeze. He showed Israelis that settlement was costly, thus helped elect Yitzhak Rabin prime minister, and thereby contributed to the start of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

As well, the current President Bush's inaction on settlements illustrates the chasm between his words and deeds. The road map places a clear U.S. requirement on Israel, barring any new settlement construction. It also postulates creation of a Palestinian state at peace with Israel—by the end of 2005.

But Bush has devoted little diplomatic effort to realizing his own policy. On the ground, to the detriment of U.S. and Israeli interests, the settlements keep growing. The U.S. "success" at stopping Maskiot only shows how much more could be done if the will were there. It's no cause for celebration. **TAP**

*The U.S. opposes
Israel's West Bank
settlements—
sort of. And so
they grow.*

Gershom Gorenberg, a Prospect senior correspondent, is the author of The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967–1977.

America's China Fantasy

Our political and business leaders insist that opening China to trade will eventually turn it into a democracy. But what if they're just making an authoritarian state much more powerful?

BY JAMES MANN

AMERICA HAS BEEN OPERATING WITH THE WRONG paradigm for China. Day after day, U.S. officials carry out policies based upon premises about China's future that are at best questionable and at worst downright false.

The mistake lies in the very assumption that political change—and with it, eventually, democracy—is coming to China, that China's political system is destined for far-reaching liberalization. Yet the Bush administration hasn't thought much about what it might mean for the United States and the rest of the world to have a repressive one-party state in China three decades from now. For while China will certainly be a richer and more powerful country in 30 years, it could still be an autocracy of one form or another. Its leadership (the Communist Party, or whatever else it calls itself in the future) may not be willing to tolerate organized political opposition any more than it does today.

That is a prospect with profound implications for the United States and the rest of the world. And it is a prospect that our current paradigm of an inevitably changing China cannot seem to envision.

The notion of a China on the road to political liberalization has taken hold in the United States because it has served certain specific interests within American society. At first, in the late 1970s and the 1980s, this idea benefited the U.S. national-security establishment. At the time, the United States was seeking close cooperation with China against the Soviet Union, so that the Soviet Union would have to worry simultaneously about both countries; the Pentagon wanted to make sure the Soviet Union tied down large numbers of troops along the Sino-Soviet border that might otherwise have been deployed in Europe. Amid the ideological struggles of the Cold War, though, cooperation with China's Communist regime was politically touchy in Washington. And so the notion that China was in the process of opening up its political system helped smooth the way with Congress and the American public.

In the 1990s, after the Soviet collapse, the idea of a politically changing China attracted a new constituency, one even more powerful than the Pentagon: the business community.

As trade and investment in China became ever more important, American companies found themselves repeatedly beset with questions about why they were doing business with such a repressive regime. The paradigm of inevitable change offered multinational corporations the answer they needed. Not only was China destined to open up its political system, but trade, the theology held, would be the key that would unlock the door. It would lead to political liberalization and to democracy, with or without the support of the Chinese leadership. Accordingly, no one outside China needs to do anything, or even think much about the subject. Why bother to protest a crackdown or urge China to allow political opposition if you know that democracy, by the inexorable laws of history, is coming anyway?

The trouble is, the entire paradigm may turn out to be wrong.

WHAT SHOULD THE U.S. STRATEGY BE FOR DEALING WITH China's Leninist regime? If you ask our established political leaders, foreign-policy experts, or sinologists what the United States should do about China, you will undoubtedly get some version or another of this approach. It is called the strategy of "integration."

The United States, the thinking goes, should try to integrate the Chinese leadership into the international community. It should seek to help China gain admission into the world's leading international organizations. According to this logic, the nature of the Chinese regime will change after China becomes a member of international bodies such as the World Trade Organization, which it has now joined. China's Communist Party leadership will gradually behave more like other governments; it will become more open in dealing with the Chinese people and with the rest of the world. Richard Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, has written of "the existing opportunity to integrate China into a U.S.-led world order."

This strategy of integration dates back to the Clinton administration. In 1994, President Clinton abandoned his attempt to use trade as a lever for improving human rights in China, then needed to divert attention away from this embarrassing reversal. He did not wish to concede that that he had just down-

JOHN RITTER

graded the cause of human rights in China; instead, he sought a new, positive-sounding description of his policy. "Integration" gradually became the label of choice, invoked by the president and his top advisers in press conference after press conference. Integration became, above all, the justification for unrestricted trade with China. "We believe it's the best way to integrate China further into the family of nations and to secure our interests and our ideals," declared Clinton in one typical speech.

George W. Bush and his advisers, without ever admitting they were doing so, have perpetuated most of the essentials of Clinton's China policy, including the avowed commitment to integration. When Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice gives a speech about China, she sooner or later calls for integrating China into the international community.

"Integration" has thus become another catchphrase like "engagement," the earlier slogan for America's China policy, which originated somewhat earlier, during the administration of George Bush Senior. With both words, however, the suggestion is the same: that is, with enough engagement, with sufficiently vigorous integration, the United States may succeed in altering the nature of the Chinese regime—although it is not

clear exactly how this is supposed to happen. In a way, the American approach is a bit patronizing to China: It sounds as if the United States is

a weary, experienced trainer bringing China to a diplomatic version of obedience school.

The fundamental problem with this strategy of integration is that it raises the obvious question: Who's integrating whom? Is the United States now integrating China into a new international economic order based upon free-market principles? Or is China now integrating the United States into a new international political order where democracy is no longer favored, and where a government's continuing eradication of all organized political opposition is accepted or ignored?

This is not merely a government issue. Private companies—including Internet firms like Yahoo, Google, and Microsoft—often use slogans like "engagement" and "integration" to explain why they have decided to do business in China despite Chinese rules and laws that allow continuing censorship. "I think [the Internet] is contributing to Chinese political engagement," Bill Gates told one business gathering. Yet if Microsoft is altering its rules to accommodate China, once again the question is: Who's changing whom?

Will it have been a success for the U.S. policy of integration if, 30 years from now, the world ends up with a Chinese regime that is still a deeply repressive one-party state but is nevertheless a member of the international community in good standing? If so, that same China will serve as a model for dictators, juntas, and other undemocratic governments throughout the world—and in all likelihood, it will be a leading supporter of these regimes. Pick a dictator anywhere today and you'll likely find that the Chinese regime is supporting him. It has rewarded Robert Mugabe, the thug who rules Zimbabwe, with an honorary professorship, and his regime with economic aid and, reportedly, new surveillance equipment. It has been the principal backer of the military regime in Burma. And when Uzbek President Islam Karimov ordered a murderous crackdown on demonstrators in 2005, China rushed to defend him.

If China maintains its current political system over the next 30 years, then its resolute hostility to democracy will have an impact in places like Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. A permanently authoritarian China could also undermine Russia's already diminishing commitment to democracy.

Thus, when America's leading officials and CEOs speak so breezily of integrating China into the international community, listeners should ask: If China remains unchanged, what sort of international community will that be? Will it favor the right to dissent? Will it protect freedom of expression? Or will it simply protect free trade and the right to invest?

But wait, say the defenders of America's existing China policy. We believe in democracy, too. There is no real disagreement here on our ultimate goals. This is all just a question of tactics. The strategy of integration (or of engagement) is designed to change China's political system and, over the long term, to end China's one-party state.



These arguments sound in some ways similar to claims made by the Chinese regime itself. Because Chinese Communist Party leaders don't like to acknowledge that they intend to maintain their monopoly on power, they sometimes tell visitors that they, too, believe in democracy, that this is the ultimate goal for China, and that it is all merely a question of timing. These claims are designed for the hopelessly gullible; by its actions, day after day, the regime makes clear its tenacious hostility to the idea of political pluralism in China.

Generally, the U.S. proponents of a strategy of integration are not so cynical. To be sure, a few of them may be antidemocratic; there have always been Americans who admire, even revere, the simplicity and convenience of autocracy. However, other proponents of integration seem to believe quite sincerely that if the United States continues its current approach toward China, Chinese leaders eventually will be willing to abandon the monopoly on political power they have maintained since 1949. Yet these same proponents fail to explain how or why, given the current U.S. strategy, China's political system will change.

If Microsoft is altering its rules to accommodate Chinese censorship, the question is, are we integrating China into a democratic world, or are they integrating us into an autocratic one?

The examples of reforms that they have invoked so far have served to divert attention away from the core issue of China's one-party state. The promotion of village elections has proved to be largely unsuccessful, both because the Chinese leadership can confine this experiment exclusively to the villages and because in the villages themselves, authorities have resorted to a variety of methods, including the use of violence, to forestall democracy.

Nor is there evidence that the American promotion of the rule of law will by itself transform the political system. So long as there is no independent judiciary and China remains a one-party regime in which judges are selected by the Communist Party, promoting the rule of law won't bring about fundamental change. Instead, it simply may lead to a more thoroughly legalized system of repression. Indeed, those lawyers in China who attempt to use the judicial system to challenge the Communist Party or to defend the rights of political dissidents have themselves been subject to persecution, including the loss of their jobs or even time in prison.

The strongest impetus for establishing the rule of law comes from the corporations and investors who are putting their money into China. They need bona fide procedures for resolving financial disputes, just as companies and investors require everywhere else in the world. It is in the interest of the Chinese regime to keep the investment dollars, euros, and yen flowing into the country, and so Chinese officials are willing to establish some judicial procedures for the foreign companies. However, the result could well be a Chinese legal system that offers special protection for foreign investors but not to ordinary Chinese

individuals, much less to targets of the regime such as political dissidents or Tibetan activists.

And that raises the larger question about America's current strategy of integration: Whom does it benefit? Above all, it enriches the elites in both China and the United States. The strategy is good for the American business community, which gets to trade with China and invest in China, *and* for the new class emerging in Chinese cities—the managers and entrepreneurs, many of them former party cadres or the relatives of cadres—that is getting rich from the booming trade and investment in its country. But it has not been nearly so beneficial for working-class Americans—particularly the tens of thousands who have lost their jobs in the United States as the end result of this “integration” policy.

The American people were told many years ago that bringing China into the international economic system would help change the Chinese political system. Now, American workers may well wonder whether this argument was merely a cruel hoax. Nor has the strategy of integration been such a blessing for ordinary

Chinese. To be sure, China as a whole is more prosperous than it has ever been, but this new prosperity is enjoyed mostly by the urban middle class, not by the country's overworked, underpaid factory laborers or by the hundreds of millions of peasants in the countryside.

Indeed, it is precisely because the regime knows how restive and disenchanted the Chinese people are that it refuses to open up to any form of democracy. The Chinese leaders know that they could be thrown out of office if there were free and open elections. Democracy, or even an organization calling for future democracy, is a threat to the existing political and economic order in China. That is why the regime continues to repress all forms of organized dissent and political opposition. It is also why China's new class of managers and executives, who profit from keeping wages low, support the regime in its ongoing repression.

A few years ago, the *New York Times* columnist Nicholas D. Kristof gave voice to one of the most common American misconceptions about China's political future. Reflecting on how China had progressed and where it was headed, Kristof wrote, “[Hard-liners] knew that after the Chinese could watch Eddie Murphy, wear tight pink dresses and struggle over what to order at Starbucks, the revolution was finished. No middle class is content with more choices of coffees than of candidates on a ballot.”

Once people are eating at McDonald's or wearing clothes from The Gap, American writers rush to proclaim that these people are becoming like us, and that their political system is therefore becoming like ours. But will the newly enriched, Starbucks-sipping, condo-buying, car-driving denizens of China's largest cities in fact become the vanguard for democracy in China? Or is it possible that China's middle-class elite will either fail to embrace calls for a democratic China or turn out to be a driving force in *opposition* to democracy?

China's emerging urban middle class, after all, is merely a small proportion of the country's overall population—far

smaller than its counterparts in Taiwan or South Korea. There are an estimated 800 million to 900 million Chinese peasants—most of them living in rural areas, although 100 million or more are working or trying to find jobs as migrants on the margins of Chinese cities. If China were to have nationwide elections, and if peasants were to vote their own interests, then the urban middle class would lose. The margin would not be close. On an electoral map of China, the biggest cities—Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, Guangzhou, and the others—might look something like the small gold stars on the Chinese flag: They would be surrounded by a sea of red. Add together the populations of China's 10 largest cities and you get a total of some 62 million people. That number is larger than the population of France or Britain or Italy. But it is still only about 5 percent of China's overall population of 1.3 billion.

If you are a multinational company trying to sell consumer products, then the rapid rise in spendable income in China's largest cities is of staggering importance. When it comes to any national elections, however, that new Chinese middle class is merely a drop in the bucket. Those in China's urban avant-garde have every reason to fear that they would be outvoted.

China's urban residents have an even greater reason to fear democracy: The Communist Party has not exactly been even-handed in its treatment of urban residents vis-à-vis peasants. On the contrary: Its policies have strongly favored the cities over the countryside. This is why there has been a wave of protests in the countryside, arising out of land seizures, local taxes, disputes over village elections, and similar controversies. It is also why the Chinese regime has been, in recent years, particularly fearful of mass movements that might sweep through the countryside and undermine the Communist Party's control. Looking at Falun Gong, the quasi-religious movement that began to take hold during the 1990s, the Chinese leadership was haunted by a specter from the past: the Taiping Rebellion, which swept out of middle China in the 19th century and shook the Qing Dynasty to its foundations.

What lies behind the Chinese Communist Party's monopoly on power and its continuing repression of dissent? The answer usually offered is the Communist Party itself—that the party and its more than 70 million members are clinging to their own power and privileges. This is certainly part of the answer, but not all of it. As China's economy has thrived in recent years, strong economic and social forces have also emerged in Chinese society that will seek to protect the existing order and their own economic interests. The new middle class in Chinese cities is coming to favor the status quo nearly as much as does the Communist Party itself.

Why do we assume that what follows the Chinese Communist Party's eventual fall will necessarily be political liberalization or democracy? One can envision other possibilities. Suppose, for example, that the party proves over the next decade to be no better at combating the country's endemic corruption than it has been over the past decade. Public revulsion over this corruption reaches the point where the Chinese people take to the streets; leaders find they cannot depend on troops to quell these demonstrations; the Communist Party finally gives way. Even then, would the result be Chinese democracy? Not necessarily.

China's urban middle class might choose to align itself with the military and the security apparatus to support some other form of authoritarian regime, arguing that it is necessary to do so in order to keep the economy running.



THE UNDERLYING PREMISE OF THE U.S. INTEGRATION strategy is that we can put off the question of Chinese democracy. But two or three decades from now, it may be too late. By then, China will be wealthier, and the entrenched interests opposing democracy will probably be much stronger. By then, China will be so thoroughly integrated into the world financial and diplomatic systems that, because of the country's sheer commercial power, there will be no international support for any movement to open up China's political system.

What should the United States do to encourage democratic change in China? A detailed list of policies can emerge only after we first rid ourselves of the delusions and the false assumptions upon which our China policy has long been based.

Above all, we have to stop taking it for granted that China is heading inevitably for political liberalization and democracy. President Bush has continued to repeat the American mantra about China, every bit as much as did his predecessors. "As

China reforms its economy, its leaders are finding that once the door to freedom is opened even a crack, it cannot be closed,” Bush declared in one typical speech. Such words convey a heartwarming sense of hopefulness about China, but they do not match the reality of China itself, where doors are regularly opened by more than a crack and then closed again.

America’s political and corporate leaders also need to stop spreading the lie that trade will bring an end to China’s one-party political system. This fiction has been skillfully employed, over and over again, to help win the support of Congress and the American public for approval of trade with China. Trade is trade; its benefits and costs are in the economic sphere. It is not a magic political potion for democracy, nor has it brought an end to political repression or to the Chinese Communist Party’s monopoly on power, and there is not the slightest reason to think it will do so in the future. In fact, it is possible that our trade with China is merely helping the autocratic regime to become richer and more powerful.

America’s current China policy amounts to an unstated bargain: We have abandoned any serious attempt to challenge China’s one-party state, and in exchange we have gotten the right to unfettered commerce with China.

What we need now, above all, are political leaders who are willing to challenge America’s stale logic and phraseology concerning China. We need politicians who will call attention to the fact that America has been carrying out a policy that benefits U.S. and Chinese business interests far more than it helps ordinary working people in either country.

The reexamination should apply to both U.S. political parties and to both poles of the ideological spectrum. On the Democratic left, we need people who will question the assumptions that it is somehow “progressive” to say that democracy doesn’t matter or that it will automatically come to China some day. Such views aren’t in the least bit progressive, liberal, or enlightened. Rather, they were developed by the Clinton administration to justify policies that would enable Bill Clinton to win corporate support. During the 1990s, there were other views concerning China within the Democratic Party—those of Nancy Pelosi, for example, and George Mitchell, who took strong stands on behalf of human rights in China. The Democrats rejected those alternative approaches a decade ago. They would do well to reexamine them now.

Within the Republican Party, we need political leaders willing to challenge the Business Roundtable mentality that has dominated the party’s thinking on China for so long. If Republicans really care about political freedom, then why should they allow U.S. policy toward China to be dominated by corporate interests while the world’s most populous country is governed by a single party that permits no political opposition? President Bush has been able to conceal his business-oriented approach to China behind a facade of hawkish rhetoric. Republicans should not allow this to happen again.

Once the United States finally recognizes that China is not moving inevitably toward democracy, we can begin to decide what the right approach should be. On the one hand, it’s possible that America may seek new measures to goad the Chinese leadership toward democratic change. America also might want to reconsider its doctrinaire adherence to free trade in dealing with China. On the other hand, it’s possible that the American people may decide that there’s absolutely nothing that the United States can or should do about a huge, permanently undemocratic, enduringly repressive China. Such an entity, a Chinese autocracy persisting into the mid-21st century, would cause large problems for U.S. policy elsewhere in the world. Nevertheless, after weighing the costs and benefits of trying to push for democracy in China, the United States could opt for a policy of sheer acceptance of the existing order.

The American people are not being given such options now, however, because the choices are not being laid out. American politicians of both parties talk regularly as if liberalization and democracy are on the way in China. But what if China remains an autocracy? At the moment, that possibility seems to be outside our public discourse. We need to change that in order to figure out what we want to do.

It would be heartening if China’s leaders proceed along the lines that America’s political leaders predict. It would be wonderful if China opens up, either gradually or suddenly, to a new political system in which the country’s 1.3 billion people are given a chance to choose their own leaders. While wishing for such an outcome, however, I will not hold my breath.

James Mann, from whose new book, The China Fantasy, this article is adapted, is author-in-residence at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies.

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Sight Unseen

When curators began creating Vietnam's first international art show since 1962, they hoped their country's new openness to Western business would mean more cultural freedom. Were they ever wrong.

BY NOY THRUPKAEW

THE ARTIST WAS SPREAD-EAGLED AGAINST THE wall. Dinh Q. Le had been putting up an enormous piece of artwork in the Ho Chi Minh City Fine Arts Museum when he realized that he was missing his level, one of only two available for the installation of Saigon Open City (SOC), Vietnam's first international art show since 1962. By the time I arrived, he had been teetering on a ladder for 10 minutes, holding up the corners of the piece while assistants scurried around the city to find his equipment.

Le's splayed-out body formed an inadvertent counterpoint to the piece he was installing—U.S. artist Nancy Spero's intriguing *Helicopter, Victim, Astronaut*. The work features a looming helicopter, a beheaded Christ figure, and a ghoulish astronaut on an umbilical tether, arms raised in victory or possibly in an attempt to grab Jesus' severed head as it soars like a football. Touchdown and hallelujah!

Le looked far less triumphant on his ladder, where he stayed for another 30 minutes. "I'm doing an endurance piece. You know, creative persistence despite bureaucratic and technical challenges," he said.

SOC is an ambitious two-year art project that was slated to open in November 2006. After months of bureaucratic red tape and organizational infighting, however, SOC never received a license from the Ministry of Culture, and the proposed time frame for the first chapter of the project ended. Designed to present Vietnamese and international artists' work on the concept of "Liberation" in Saigon's museums, the first chapter of SOC was doomed to a twilight of waiting and uncertainty. Museums occasionally granted permission for SOC to hang its works, only to retract it or be overruled by government bodies. (Le hung *Helicopter, Victim, Astronaut* in the Fine Arts Museum, for example, but no one was allowed to see it.) As Thai cocurator Gridthiya Gaweewong said, "We were closed down without ever opening."

It's a particularly painful irony. Vietnam's first large-scale, private cultural venture was designed to bring art to the public, but instead the art was beaten back underground. Coming on the heels of Vietnam's successful bid to join the World

Trade Organization and a historic visit by President Bush last November, the plight of SOC underscores the ways in which the country's official increasing openness seems to extend only toward economics, not art.

"One leg wants to walk forward with the WTO," said Gaweewong, "but the other leg is stuck in ideology. As this goes on, Vietnam will have an internal debate between the wallet and the mind. Saigon Open City raised so many of the questions in this debate and it seems like we have one answer: The wallet is open, but the mind is not."

IRON PUSSY WAS STRIDING TOWARD THE SOC OFFICES, A CHAMPA flower tucked behind his ear. Iron Pussy is a Thai artist named Michael Shaowanasai, famous for his drag-queen doppelganger, an avenger in white go-go boots who is the star of the films *The Adventure of Irony Pussy, 1-4*. A few days before Le's "endurance piece" debut, in November, I had spent my first morning in Saigon trying to chase down the "advance press screening" of SOC works in various museums, to no avail. *Come back on Tuesday*, said one museum. *Maybe Wednesday*, said another. *Saigon what?* said the last. Now, like Alice pursuing the White Rabbit, I trotted after Shaowanasai, a good friend of curator Gaweewong: He was a sign I was in the right place.

I ran up the stairs and plunged into a scene of hot, heaving chaos. Artists were racing around with photographs, stringing empty shampoo bottles together, and frantically framing paintings. I followed the champa flower into the curatorial offices, where Shaowanasai grabbed me and hissed, "They're *crazy!* They want more bribes!"

"They," of course, were Vietnamese officials, for whom the charms of "tea money" are even today hard for officials to resist. According to one SOC staffer, a sizeable portion of the project's budget—primarily underwritten by the Ford Foundation—was slated for greasing palms (and was listed in the budget as "service fees").

Although SOC is struggling with Vietnam's still-rampant corruption, the economy is more transparent and open than it used to be. In the 1980s, the Vietnamese government embarked upon financial reform—the *doi moi* (renovation, or renewal) policy.

Marked by a turn away from collectivization toward a more liberalized, market-based economy, *doi moi* also signaled a more relaxed stance toward artistic and civil freedoms. Although civil strictures were tightened after the Tiananmen Square protests, there was no way to stop the country's economic momentum. After the United States lifted its trade embargo in 1994 and normalized diplomatic relations a year later, the Vietnamese economy began booming. These days, Vietnam is the second-fastest growing economy in Asia, behind only juggernaut China.

Saigon saw much of this explosive growth. These days, the city's streets swarm with motorcycles and its sidewalks with the sleek boutiques and restaurants popular with the growing middle-class and with the well-off *Viet kieu* (foreign-born or returnee Vietnamese) who are making the city their home in increasing numbers. The city has a bristling, fierce, at times desperate energy—the kind of propulsion that people put on

being Vietnam's artistic center, packed with galleries, museums, and local cultural institutions—the refined, traditional, and more well-established older sister to Saigon's brash, cash-obsessed teen, a reputation that was cemented after the North's victory in the war. "Hanoi thought that Saigon's artistic community was too design-oriented, commercial, individualistic," said Michael DiGregorio, Ford Foundation's Vietnam program officer. While Hanoi artists earned a reputation for traditional objects and tasteful modernist painting, Saigon was supposedly fed by a tourist demand for what Gaweewong wryly calls "Ms. Water Market"—pastoral scenes of women in traditional clothing—and branded by outsiders as too scattered, materialistic, and Western-oriented.

It is largely an unfair image. The small but active art scene in Saigon hosts a plethora of artistic initiatives started by young expatriates, *Viet kieu*, and Vietnamese artists—gal-

leries and projects such as Galerie Quynh, Blue Space Gallery, Himiko, A Little Blah Blah, Atelier Wonderful, and Mogas Station, featuring shows, guest-artist residencies, impromptu workshops and screenings, and even an art criticism magazine. Vietnamese art has a long history of foreign influence (Chinese lacquerware and silk-painting techniques, French oil painting, Russian social realism, Cuban animation styles), and Saigon's exposure during the Vietnam War to the abstract works popular in the United States at the time led to the development of more conceptual, nonrepresentational art than the type of art that flourished in Hanoi.

SOC was designed to tap into that energy. It began as an initia-

tive of the Ford Foundation as conceived by DiGregorio and Do Thi Tuyet Mai, a commercial-gallery owner in Saigon. But it struggled to hold on to curators, who were daunted by the scale of the project, the bureaucratic obstacles, and conflict with Do, who has a reputation for confrontational behavior. In 2005, Do and Le, who is on the SOC board, asked Gaweewong to curate SOC. In November of that year, after recruiting Thai conceptual artist Rirkrit Tiravanija as codirector, she agreed. Both Thai artists are renowned for creating and curating unconventional and broad-spirited works. Gaweewong has coordinated everything from experimental-film festivals in Bangkok to an exhibition on the politics of fun in Berlin. Tiravanija, winner of a 2004 Hugo Boss prize, has a reputation for making works of creative chaos. According to a *New Yorker* profile, Tiravanija installed a facsimile of his apartment in a New York gallery, invited the exhibit visitors to draw on the walls and sleep, and allowed a gay men's magazine to use the space to do a pornography photo shoot.



Death by a Thousand Blows: Nancy Spero's *Helicopter, Victim, Astronaut* was hung, but no one was allowed to see it.

display when they are exiting a room with a bad smell. The smell of grinding poverty, war, and foreign oppression, perhaps—"A thousand years of Chinese rule, a hundred years of French subjugation, and ten years of American domination, but we survive, unified," goes a famous Vietnamese saying.

The air smells of consumption: choking exhaust fumes from countless Honda Dreams, and smoky-sweet odors of food sold at all hours, the haystack scent of boiled peanuts, the lush sweatiness of fruit veering into rot. Shoeshine boys plead for a crack at unpolishable plastic flip-flops while nouveau-riche kids trawl the streets, hip-hop music pumping out of their cars' tinted windows. The city has a Wild West feeling of dirty opportunity—the chance, perhaps illusory, to remake oneself through gritted teeth and some wheedling, and to reap the money the first two could bring.

Saigon's art is similarly marked, at least in the minds of those outside the city. The capital of Hanoi has long prided itself on

Gaweewong and Tiravanija crafted a plan for a two-year project that would be split into three chapters: Liberation, Unification, and Reconstruction, each focusing on a different period and theoretical concept in local, national, and world history. SOC wasn't supposed to be a show: It was meant to generate what the curators called "sustainable art." By embedding the project into the city's often glaringly propagandistic museums and building long-term artistic infrastructure, the curators hoped SOC would yield opportunities for what Tiravanija termed "subversive use."

"Maybe it will be like Suvarnabhumi," he said, two months before SOC's slated opening. Suvarnabhumi, Thailand's new airport and now one of the largest in the world, opened in September 2006 with great pomp and circumstance. On opening day, tens of thousands of people showed up, not only to catch flights but to picnic, shop, and jubilantly clog the toilets. "The picture of modernity the Thai government wanted to project was violated by how people used [Suvarnabhumi]. ... Maybe the same thing can happen with SOC. We know the government wants to attract tourists, but hopefully we can leave something behind that people in Saigon can use to make their own meaning."

BY NOVEMBER, HOWEVER, IT WAS UNCLEAR HOW much of SOC would ever be seen, let alone left behind for others to appreciate. SOC staff had spent months locked in negotiations with government and museum authorities, to little avail. SOC was supposed to open at the end of November, but without a license, was barred from opening its shows, advertising its activities, or even hanging a sign to announce its forthcoming unofficial opening. But word of mouth still drew throngs of curious viewers to the offices on "opening day," November 26. A giant rocket made from empty shampoo bottles loomed in one corner, and one room was devoted to an intricate timeline of international and domestic events and cultural trends.

Performance pieces broke out periodically, including a pointed act by a real-life father and son: The father was lying on top of his son while reading aloud from the *Kieu*, a legendary poem every Vietnamese schoolchild has spent hours reciting. The poem centers on a young woman, celebrated for her filial piety, who becomes a prostitute to save her family. At the end of the performance, the son squirmed out from under his complacently reading father: He was finished with all of it, his face seemed to say—the tradition, his oblivious father, this debased survival. He wanted his own damn life. The crowd murmured in agreement and then squeezed on through the other rooms that were still dirty from the SOC staff's orgy of framing and full of volunteers slumped everywhere, exhausted.

From there, SOC visitors raced around to view whatever the museums had allowed to be displayed, and could still detect some of the frisson between SOC pieces and their surrounds that the curators had intended. The Southern Women's Museum,

for instance, devoted most of its space to women who had lost their sons during what the Vietnamese call the American War, to exceptional cardiac surgeons, and to textile workers—in other words, to woman as Communist hero, victim, worker, opponent of colonization.

The top floor of the museum is emblazoned with a decades-old glowing mural dedicated to Ho Chi Minh—and here stood Nguyen Quang Huy's astounding SOC piece *Unknown Woman*. The work is a marvelous inversion of Vietnam's political and reli-

The endless delays and mysterious decisions by unseen figures are in keeping with Vietnam's history of tight control over the media, the Internet, and the arts.

gious symbolism: Three Buddhas whose cut-off heads have been replaced by typical moonshine and ginseng jars, filled instead with market vegetables and fruits. On a screen behind the Buddha statues, Nguyen played footage of endlessly toiling women vendors and workers accompanied by a voiceover of a poem by fellow artist Nguyen Minh Thanh. "Mothers who trade in everything ... chased by policemen Sweet or shrewish ... dear mother, we are kneeling down to extol you ... we can never be orphaned." By placing Nguyen's work in the room dedicated to the Ho cult of personality, SOC was pitting one type of iconography against another, the unknown woman against the beatified man.

MUCH OF THE BLAME FOR SOC'S DISHEVELED STATE CAN BE laid on the endless censorship and bureaucratic buck-passing dished out by three sets of authorities: the individual museums, the Communist Party organization known as the People's Committee, and the Ministry of Culture in Hanoi. According to Gaweewong, SOC became something of a monkey in the middle, asking permission from one institution only to be told to get permission from another, which would bounce the staff back to the first. During the negotiations, 50 percent of SOC's works were cut, all without official explanation, including works by pre-1975 artists from the South, the video works, snippets from various other Vietnamese works, and entire works by selected foreign artists.

The endless delays and the mysterious decisions by unseen figures are in keeping with Vietnam's history of tight control over the media, the Internet, and the arts. The country has no independent news media, and although one can easily access personal e-mail accounts and Western media sites, numerous Vietnamese-language Web sites that mention democracy, religious issues, or the names of political dissidents are blocked. In addition, cyber-dissidents who have written critical e-mails about the government or circulated articles about democracy have served jail time. Prior to President Bush's visit to Vietnam in November, a number of prominent dissidents were arrested and beaten in order to dissuade them from mounting demonstrations or from talking to foreign journalists, and after a brief period of allowing journalists to report on corruption, the government suspended two papers from publishing in October



A Study in Contrasts: Nguyen Quang Huy's *Unknown Woman* was hung near a glowing, decades-old mural dedicated to Ho Chi Minh.

in an attempt to put a check on criticism. Art openings also haven't escaped the government's control and are disrupted by rounds of censorship, withholding of permits, and even electrical outages that leave galleries or performance spaces dark while lights glow just next door.

The government's decision to continue to clamp down on culture even while opening up the economy is revealing, according to Hoang Hung, a longtime art and culture journalist and one of the editors of the vibrant politics and culture Web site www.talawas.org, which is blocked by a firewall in Vietnam. In an effort to counterbalance the country's rapid transition to a globalized economy, "suppressing culture is [the government's] brake on the system—use the ideological system to slow the vehicle," says Hoang.

For a government with this type of attitude toward culture, the avant-garde and international art presented by SOC causes the worst kind of discomfort: It is nontraditional and fiercely ambiguous, in contrast to the government's fondness for, as Hoang put it, "traditional culture and 'the Vietnamese way of life'

that can counteract the changes [in] economics, the U.S. style of life." Conceptual art is particularly suspect for its foreign flavor, for its flouting of social-realist demands to convey revolutionary messages, and for its encouragement of the bourgeois individualism of open interpretation. Hoang explained that "in the past, ambiguous work was counterrevolutionary. [The government] hates this kind of work, and ambivalence, too." Hoang spent more than three years in jail in the 1980s for writing what the Communist government said was "ambiguous, reactionary" poetry.

The reasons for some of the SOC cuts, however, were not ambiguous at all. One of the censored pieces was Jean-Luc Godard's *Far From Vietnam*—a particularly resonant decision given that the director had been denied permission by the Vietnamese to film his pro-North Vietnam film during the war. "They can't accept that events during that period are narrated by anyone other than them," said Gaweeewong. Also cut were works by pre-war Southern artists or by those seen as sympathetic to [South Vietnam's] cause, including art by Sue Hajdu, cofounder of the Saigon artists' initiative A Little Blah Blah and a former

codirector of the SOC project. “Two million dead soldiers are cut out,” she said. “The South is not allowed to represent itself. You’re not allowed to remember it was a civil war.”

Irreverent conceptual works such as Hoang’s were tossed; pictures of female nudes were clipped from Ly Hoang Ly’s giant installation outside the Southern Women’s Museum; and Nguyen Quang Huy’s *Unknown Women* piece, initially approved, seemed to run afoul of the authorities for the “disrespect” shown to the Buddha statues and for mentioning police harassment. In perhaps its most telling cut, the government censored Yoko Ono’s interactive work *My Mother Is Beautiful*, in which she encouraged spectators to draw and write about their mothers on a giant scroll of paper. “The government is afraid of what people will write,” said Gaweewong. “They won’t be able to control it.”

Gaweewong is uncertain about the likelihood of holding the second and third chapters of SOC, which were to focus on public art and community-oriented processes of creating art. “This word ‘liberation’—that’s the real question now. The Vietnamese say they’ve liberated themselves from the Chinese, the French, the Americans, but now the government is oppressing its own people even as [it] seek[s] economic ‘openness.’ Is that what ‘liberation’ means in Vietnam?”


SOC also faces the distrust of artists over its nonprofit status. Because there is no way to register a nonprofit organization in Vietnam, SOC registered as a private company and immediately inherited all of the enmity artists have traditionally felt toward corrupt business interests. “We came into a place where people

have no idea about NGOs [nongovernmental organizations],” said Gaweewong. “They think it is a money-laundering thing” for shadowy business or government interests. Artists began to whisper about financial accountability and whether the SOC staff was making money off the art somehow.

Do, in charge of negotiating with the government and connecting with the Vietnamese arts community, was openly criticized by artists and critics at SOC open sessions. “No one wants to work with me,” she said, tears welling in her eyes. “But ... [n]ow everyone talks about us all over the world and we have a show. What do people want from me?” Perhaps they would have wanted her to be more of an advocate against the government, but Do did not see this as her role. “The government manages the country, and has to guide the country according to the government’s philosophy. Artists should have their freedom, but ... artists need to follow society—they are also citizens.”

For Do, SOC seemed less an innovative art project than a piece of PR. “Four years ago, no one talked about our scene—they went to Hanoi for art. On Monday, we were all over the news,” said Do. “I sold several lacquerwares yesterday. More people are coming to buy art, and that’s the point of SOC. More people coming, spending on art, that’s how Vietnamese art can survive.” That’s a vision—art as capitalism—that the government would probably approve. **TAP**

Noy Thrupkaew is a senior correspondent for The American Prospect.



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SPECIAL REPORT MARCH 2007

MOTHER LOAD

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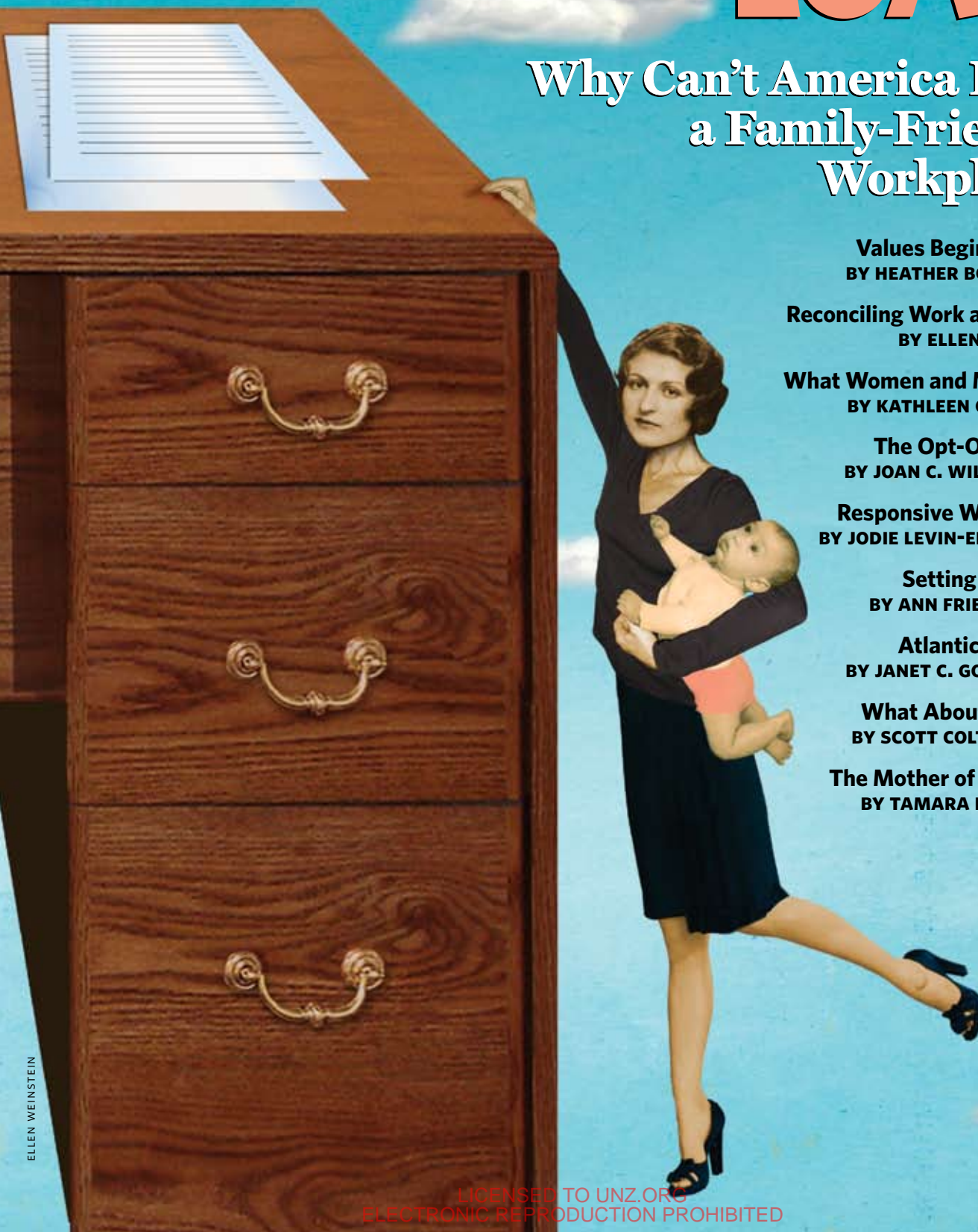
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Values Begin at Home, but Who's Home?

In the struggle to balance work and family, work is winning.

BY HEATHER BOUSHEY

Family is the center of everyday American life. Our parents are our first protectors, first teachers, first role models, and first friends. Parents know that America's great reward is the quiet but incomparable satisfaction that comes from building their families a better life. Strong families, blessed with opportunity, guided by faith, and filled with dreams are the heart of a strong America.

— 2004 DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM

Americans are said to be deeply concerned about family values. One of those values, surely, is the need to reconcile the ability to be a responsible parent, a loving partner in a relationship, and a successful worker. What is the economy for, if not to enable families to live and thrive? We work to live, not live to work.

Yet, despite the symbolic genuflecting to values, these issues have been appallingly absent from the political conversation. While the right has won the rhetoric wars by emphasizing the traditional values, liberals in electoral politics have not seriously address paid leave, or child care, or the other policy challenges that might make it less arduous to reconcile work and family. The Democrats' 2004 presidential platform vacuously talked about "valuing parenting," but nowhere did it say that parents have the right to time off when their children are ill, a right guaranteed by every nearly every other democracy.

THE WORKPLACE: WHAT'S REALLY AT WORK?

Compared to a generation ago, families have lost 539 hours per year to the U.S. economy—13.5 weeks of full-time work. Where did the hours go? Intuitively, we all know the answer: Mom got a job (see figure on next page). But while families put in more hours at work than their parents did, their infla-

tion-adjusted incomes are only a tad higher (see figure on next page). And, when you adjust for the additional hours worked, median living standards are actually lower. Because Mom works, families have been able to keep their incomes from falling—but, this doesn't mean that the economy is working for families.

Families are angry, frustrated, and confused about this time grab. According to the Families and Work Institute in New York, two-thirds of parents say that they don't have enough time with their children and nearly two-thirds of married workers say that they don't have enough time with their spouse. Nearly half of all employees with families report conflicts between their job and their family lives, more so than a generation ago.

With some political leadership, this anger could translate into profound policy changes.

WHERE'S MOM?

When we measure the economy by how well it works for families, we see that the most important trend affecting family well-being has been the movement of mothers out of the home and into the workplace. With each uptick of women's labor force participation, families lost another unpaid domestic worker who cooked, cleaned, and cared for her family. Back in the Ozzie and Harriet days, Mom was at

THIS SPECIAL REPORT grew out of an October 2006 conference titled "Who Cares: Dilemmas of Work and Family in the 21st Century," sponsored by the Council on Contemporary Families. Further information is available at www.contemporaryfamilies.org.

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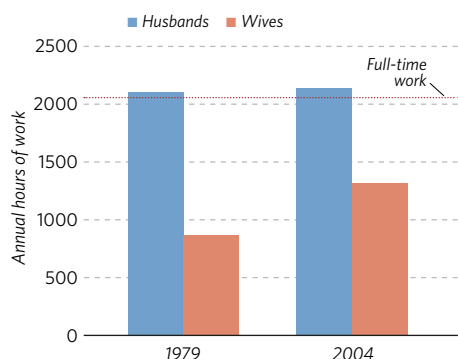
home (where she worked for free). She made a home-cooked dinner most every night. She helped Uncle Joe when he came home from the hospital. She kept an eye on the children—hers and the neighbors’—and she felt that her neighborhood was safe since every other mother on the block was doing the same thing.

What’s remarkable, however, is that even though mothers work more today, they also spend more time parenting. Time diaries show that over the past decade and a half, mothers spent an average of four more hours per week at a paid job and five more hours parenting. Mothers now spend less time on housework, yet they have less time for themselves. This

even good.) Now, when Uncle Joe needs help getting dressed and going shopping, Ozzie and Harriet have to kick in for a home-health aide.

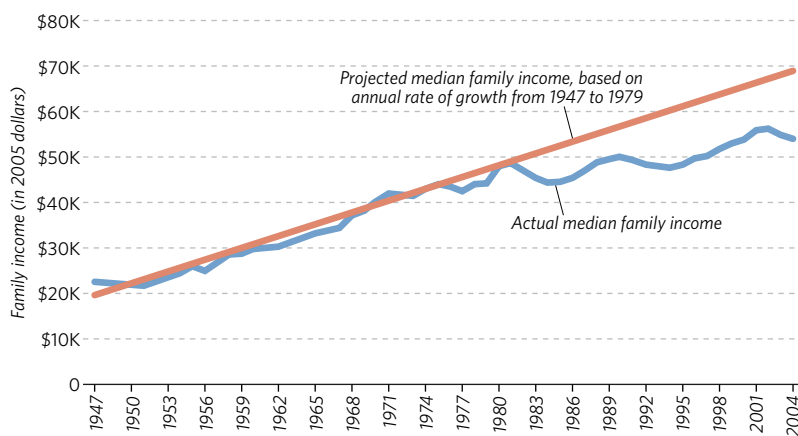
“Caring services” are expensive because they are fairly immune to cost-cutting strategies. Unless technology can put eyes on the back of the head of the day-care worker, she can’t watch more than a few children at a time. Yet only the very richest families can afford to pay a living wage for caring services. We must look to alternative financing. Government funds our public schools and subsidizes public colleges and universities, yet we spend less than one-half of 1 percent of our federal budget on child care.

ANNUAL HOURS OF WORK OF MARRIED FAMILIES IN THE MIDDLE FIFTH OF THE INCOME DISTRIBUTION, 1979 & 2004



SOURCE: MISHEL, BERNSTEIN, AND ALLEGRETTO, 2006

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME, 1947-2005



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

underscores how important family is to us. It also underscores that mothers may feel guilt about being at work rather than at home and that they are doing all they can to make up for the stolen time.

Fathers also are spending more time with their children. By 2000, fathers spent two more hours per week at their job and four more hours parenting than they did in 1985. [See Scott Coltrane, “What About Fathers?” page A20.] But, fathers are not doing more chores around the house. At first, when mothers moved into employment, men did more household chores, but during the 1990s, men stopped helping around the house as much. By the end of the 1990s, men’s hours of housework had fallen below their 1970 level.

For today’s families, it is a luxury to cook a meal together or stay home with the children, rather than work. Nearly one-third of all U.S. children are being raised by a single parent, who most likely works. Even in married-couple families with children, two-thirds have both the husband and wife working. In more than half, the wife works full time.

The new family economics requires that families pay for care, rather than have Mom do it for free. Today, if Harriet were from a low-to-moderate income family and went to work, she would pay upwards of a fifth of her total family income on child care. (And, more than likely, that care is not excellent or

WHY DOES MOM WORK?

Mothers work because they can and also because they have to. The feminist revolution opened up job opportunities and the Pill allowed women to choose when to have a family. But, for most families, if Mom’s at work, it’s because she has to be. Who can raise a family on just one income? How can a single mother even contemplate not working now that we’ve closed the welfare offices?

When they grow up, most girls expect to hold a job and most boys expect their wives will work. As a result, girls are increasingly investing in their own “human capital.” Women now outnumber men on college campuses. And women must expect to make use of those college degrees by getting a job after graduation or they wouldn’t be taking out so many loans.

Once a girl grows up and gets a job, her earnings will play a critical role in her family’s well-being. Married Moms generally still do not earn as much as Dad (although one-third of wives do earn more than their husbands), but they bring home, on average, more than a third of the family’s income. Because Mom works, the family is most likely in (or at least close to) the middle class. And the higher the family income, the more likely it is that Mom has a job and works full time. In recent decades, the families that were upwardly mobile were those who had a working wife.

Low-income, single mothers have no choice but to work, if they want to feed their families. A decade ago, welfare reform challenged low-income single mothers to find jobs. Over the next few years, the employment rate of single mothers rose from 71 percent in 1991 to 82 percent in 2000. Now, not only are single mothers as likely to work as married mothers, but they also usually work more hours. Even so, the typical, unmarried mother teeters on the edge of poverty.

Working is not just about the present, but about securing an economic future. Dropping out of employment—even for

union. Now that employment rates are rising again (the 2001 recession having been harder on women than other recent recessions), women—and mothers—are returning to work. Opt out over.

In reality, work, not life, has been winning the work/life battle.

For life to win, we need policies that directly challenge employers to work with their employees to provide them with usable flexibility. This doesn't have to be costly, but it does require that employers give up some control over the workday.

To take back the values issue we need to begin at home. Americans are waiting for economic policies that recognize that workers have families—policies that require employers to work with their employees to let life win.

just a year or two—has a long-term effect on women's wages. For every two years out of the labor force, a woman's earnings fall by about 10 percent and this "mommy penalty" does not go away once the kids are grown. Earnings are lower for the rest of a woman's working life. Most mothers also know that taking time off now may make it impossible for them to support themselves in the future if they get divorced or their husband loses his job.

WORK/LIFE IMBALANCES

Even though most workers have someone in their life who needs care, very few jobs make it easy to balance work with family needs. Most likely, Mom works in an office, or a store, school, or hospital. If she's a professional, she probably has access to some family-friendly perks, like health insurance, paid leave, and some flexibility. However, she still faces a labor market where she'll earn less than her male colleagues and have less upward mobility.

Most mothers, however, are not professionals. Regular working mothers typically have little or no control over their weekly schedules. In many service-sector jobs, schedules are posted only a few days in advance, and mandatory overtime is common, as are hours outside the typical 9-to-5. These scheduling issues can make finding—and keeping—quality child care nearly impossible.

Many families, especially lower-income families, resort to "tag-team" parenting, where one spouse watches the children while the other one works. This can save on child-care costs, but it's hard on marriages. This is where economic reality meets family values. Progressives could take back the "family values" mantel if they focused on fixing the ways that jobs make it difficult (or impossible) for people to be members of families.

Recent news stories have claimed that the battle for work/life balance is over, and that life won. They say women are opting out of employment, and the evidence they point to is that the share of women working fell after 2000. But this drop in employment was actually caused by a reces-

But, life also requires work and we need government programs that provide safe, affordable, and high-quality care for children, the ill, and the elderly while we're all toiling away. The truth is that Harriet and her ilk spoiled us terribly. They gave us something nearly priceless for free. Now that most women work, we need to pay for care and it is expensive. However, the costs of not paying for it are certainly far higher. [See Janet Gornick's "Atlantic Passages" for more how other countries do this, page A19.]

IT'S THE FAMILY ECONOMY, STUPID

The 2006 elections showed that voters are concerned about economic security. But economic security doesn't just mean that voters want to see strong job growth and reliable health insurance; it also means that your own economic situation is secure and is not tearing your family apart.

To take back the values issue, we need to begin at home. See who's minding the children, caring for the family. See that most parents work. See that most working parents don't have the right to take a sick day when children get the flu. See that most working parents don't have the right to alter their schedule to pick up the children on time after school, or even attend a soccer game.

Americans are waiting for economic policies that recognize that workers have families—policies that require employers to work with their employees to let life win. Candidates in 2008 take note: All voters—regardless of how industrialized or de-industrialized their precinct—are a part of some form of family. Get a few more of these "family values" voters to turnout, and you're well on your way to durable legislative majorities. Tell them how you will pay attention to work/life issues and tame our economy to make it work for us, so life wins. **TAP**

Heather Boushey is a senior economist at the Center for Economic and Policy Research and coauthor of The State of Working America 2002–2003 and Hardships in America: The Real Story of Working Families.

The Architecture of Work and Family

To have a job and a life, we need to redesign the national household.

BY ELLEN BRAVO

WE HEAR A LOT OF TALK IN THE UNITED STATES today about “family values” and “personal responsibility.” And yet being a good family member here can cost you your job or a career opportunity, or imperil your health and security. Conversely, being a conscientious employee can jeopardize a loved one, destroy a relationship (or prevent you from forming one), add to the health or learning problems of a dependent child, force an aging parent into a nursing home, or create a public-health hazard.

CHOICES NOBODY SHOULD HAVE TO MAKE

Consider these examples:

Robbie, a 9to5 member of the organization 9to5 in Milwaukee, lost her fast-food job when her son called to say that his younger brother had been hit by a car. “Leave and you’re fired,” the boss told her. Robbie pleaded with her manager to see the urgency of the situation, but he refused. She left anyway, and took the boy to the emergency room, where the hospital staff determined that he had a broken arm.

Julie was in a much higher-paying job than Robbie, but felt she was being driven out after spending 13 years there. “You have to be willing to give it all to the company,” she told me at a gathering of professional women in Milwaukee. “There are no role models of women with young kids in upper management. They wanted me to fly somewhere on July 4th. When I told them I had family plans, they were aghast.”

Jane got flexibility at her job—but paid for it in compensation, benefits, and opportunity. An engineer for a large organization that always lands on the “best places to work” lists, Jane loves her job and is grateful that she was able to reduce her workweek to 30 hours. But that’s not all that was cut. “Health insurance has a significantly higher premium [for part-timers],” Jane explained in an e-mail to a statewide women’s project known as Wisconsin Women Equal Prosperity. “Vacation and sick time are cut in half regardless of hours worked per week. I lost tuition reimbursement and paid maternity leave. Holiday pay was just eliminated. I’ve been promoted three times, but now have hit the limit [of advancement opportunities].”

And it’s not just women’s jobs that are affected; so is women’s ability to be conscientious parents. Teachers say that since wel-

fare “reform,” they’ve never seen so many kids coming to school sick—or older kids missing school to watch a young sibling or cousin—because their parents aren’t able to stay home. Before you blame the parents, though, be aware that many students are making these decisions themselves because of the work demands placed on their mothers and fathers.

Robbie’s son got hit by the car *before* she left for work; he chose not to tell her because he knew she’d be fired if she didn’t go in. Carissa Peppard, then 21 years old, came to Washington, D.C., in 2005 with her mother and other 9to5 activists to speak to their senators. She told me she always tried to drag herself to school when she was sick. “I’d wonder whether I should tell my mom. Would we have groceries this week if she had to stay home with me?”

POWERFUL SOCIAL CHANGES, FEEBLE POLICIES

The workforce has changed enormously in the last 30 years, but the workplace has not kept pace. Thanks to greater opportunities and greater financial pressure, women have streamed into paid employment. [See Heather Boushey, “Values Begin at Home, But Who’s Home?” page A2.] While some employers have made the workplace family-friendly (more on this later), many operate as if workers were all still men with wives at home full time. For certain groups of women, particularly African Americans and immigrants, that picture was never accurate—a majority of mothers always worked. Now working mothers—even those with infants—are the norm.

Where workplace policies do exist, they’re often at the margins and unrelated to how work is organized. One memo announces you can work part time, another outlines the benefits you’ll lose if you reduce your hours. Managers describe the leave policy, then scold you for not having more billable hours. Women *can* climb the corporate ladder—provided they’re available to meet, move, or travel at a moment’s notice.

Social class and rank may affect benefits as well. In some workplaces, managers have lactation rooms; assembly-line workers, however, don’t even get breaks. Less than 5 percent of employers have on-site child-care centers—and frontline workers can’t always afford the fees. Or the center may coexist with mandatory overtime. Professional women like Jane often lose benefits and opportunities when they reduce hours, but workers at Wal-Mart and many other places see their hours cut

or capped without their consent, and any health and pension benefits disappear altogether. For low-wage workers, “personal days” mean the ones you don’t clock in.

Deficient employer policies reflect the sorely outmoded public policies that set minimum standards for how workers are treated. Whenever I speak to groups of women looking for work, they tell stories of being asked by recruiters about their future family plans. “Isn’t that illegal?” someone will ask. It is illegal to ask women and not men—but in most states and localities, it’s not illegal to ask both. Only Alaska and the District of Columbia prohibit discrimination based on family-care responsibility.

It’s easy to forget that until 1978, it was perfectly legal in this country to fire someone for being pregnant. Two years



earlier, the Supreme Court ruled that it was not discrimination to treat “pregnant people” differently, because not all women are pregnant. You may not think Congress knows much, but even its members understood that pregnancy does have something to do with sex. After much organizing by grass-roots groups, Congress passed the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA), which prohibited firing or refusing to hire someone for being pregnant.

But the law has a big loophole: It doesn’t require the employer to hold the woman’s job for her when she leaves to give birth. I’ve never understood how that’s not tantamount to firing, but lawyers say otherwise. The PDA also requires that employers with temporary-disability programs include pregnancy along with other short-term disabilities. Before then, many did not. However, the majority of women didn’t then and still don’t work for firms that offer temporary-disability benefits. And pregnant women weren’t the only ones needing consideration at work.

Groups then organized to pass the 1993 Family and Medical

Leave Act (FMLA), which included a job guarantee, covered men as well as women, and included a broader range of care needs. Employer lobbyists proclaimed that any such bill was unnecessary, because businesses were already providing leave. Turns out most of those employers were simply complying with the PDA. Two-thirds had to change their policy after passage of the law—many to include men, or adoptive parents, or to allow for time to care for a seriously ill family member.

Although it was a critical first step, the FMLA is fairly meager. It applies only to firms of 50 or more employees and covers only those who work at least 25 hours a week and have been on the job at least a year. That leaves out more than two in five private-sector workers. The narrow definition of “family” means that those who need time to care for domestic partners, siblings, in-laws, or other relatives may be out of luck. And the fact that the FMLA is unpaid renders it moot for large numbers of workers.

The FMLA has another enormous limitation: It applies only to serious illness. Fortunately, most kids don’t get leukemia, but they all get stomach flus and colds and a host of other ailments not covered by this law. Not to worry, proclaim the business lobbyists: Workers can use their sick days for that. But half of those in the workforce—and three-fourths of low-wage workers, plus five-sixths of part-time workers—don’t have any paid sick days to use. Many who do have the benefit aren’t allowed to use it to care for a sick family member.

WHAT’S AT STAKE

Thanks to the lopsided share of family caregiving that falls to women, the biological demands of pregnancy, and the still-prevalent gender stereotyping in the workplace, women are disproportionately harmed by these outmoded systems. But males feel the fallout as well. Many more men would be better fathers, sons, husbands if they weren’t punished for it at work. Men who earn low wages have little or no wiggle room. Men in managerial or professional jobs are expected to be fathers and are patted on the back for leaving work early to take in a kid’s soccer game—unless they begin to act too much like mothers, in which case their pay and promotions begin to dip.

In reality, everyone needs time to care. Even those who aren’t parents *have* parents. Others have partners who may need care. And everyone faces the prospect of needing time themselves to heal from an illness or an injury.

Employers can do a lot by implementing effective practices, many of which cost little or nothing, and all of which strengthen the bottom line. These include flexible scheduling—allowing employees to take a parent for a checkup or attend a child’s school play and make up the time, to stagger start and end times to accommodate child-care hours or commuter traffic, and to swap shifts with coworkers. Any overtime or shift changes should be voluntary. Employees should have paid time off for routine illnesses, in addition to accommodation for more demanding events like a new child or a seriously ill family member. The guarantees and time period of the FMLA should be the minimum employers adopt. Employers should

also offer quality part-time options—reduced hours with at least prorated benefits, equitable hourly rates, and equal access to training and promotional opportunities. That could mean employees working a shorter week, sharing a job with a coworker, gradually increasing hours after returning from leave, or gradually cutting hours when phasing into retirement. Policies should be formal and open to all employees.

What workers want is recognition that life doesn't begin and end at the workplace. Even employers who can't afford to set up an on-site child-care center can link employees with local referral agencies. Those with more resources can provide subsidies for dependent care—for elders as well as young children—or help increase the supply of quality care. Innovative employers have also come up with short-term, no-interest loans to help employees stay employed when hit with unexpected expenses.

How successful such policies are depends on corporate culture. As Barbara Wankoff from the audit, tax, and advisory firm KPMG noted, employers can offer all kinds of programs and policies, “but it's the message that leadership sends with those policies that really dictates how they're used.”

Above all, we need a sea change in how employers measure success, advancing people based on work quality rather than face time.

The good news is that model policies exist in many places, and they work. Research continually reminds us that workers who feel respected as whole people show greater loyalty and

SAS's 35-hour workweek. At the high end, employees don't put in more than 45 hours. Even the CEO leaves at 6 o'clock, when the gates close. Why? Because this is an employer that realizes that workers perform better when they are rested. No wonder SAS has been called “the world's sanest company.”

Success stories like this one do move other employers to action. Spreading the word is important. But expecting all business owners to follow suit is like thinking 2-year-olds can decide when they need a time-out from play. We need to guarantee a reasonable floor for all workers, and that means public-policy changes. These include guarantees of paid sick days; accessible and affordable family leave paid for by the shared risk of a social-insurance fund; equity for part-time workers; and quality, affordable dependent care. It also means a reasonable workweek with no mandatory overtime. Such policies will work only with a meaningful wage floor: Money is a work/life issue.

WHAT IS BEING DONE

I coordinate a network of state coalitions working to expand paid leave and other family-flexible options. These groups are made up of diverse allies, from the AARP to the ACLU—grass-roots groups fighting for kids, economic justice, worker's rights, and aging populations, alongside progressive employers, teachers and school principals, interfaith councils, and disability activists. The network, known as the Multi-States Working Families Consortium, is a new model of collaboration, where groups raise funds together and share them equally. They also share strategies, materials, and organizing tips.

Each of these groups and many others are winning changes at the state and local level, as well as working together for new federal policies. In 2004, a state coalition

in California successfully won expansion of its Family Temporary Disability Insurance (FTDI) program to cover leave for other family-care purposes. Groups in New York and New Jersey, two other states with FTDI funds, are working to do the same. Washington, Massachusetts, and Illinois are looking for ways to create a new social-insurance fund for this purpose. A number of states have bills pending that would expand access to the FMLA or to allow its use for routine school and medical appointments. Last November, San Francisco passed the nation's first citywide ordinance to guarantee a minimum number of paid sick days to all employees. Groups from Maine to Montana will be introducing similar measures in city councils and state legislatures.

Together, such coalitions are laying the basis for a family-friendly future and building the power to make it happen. The changes they seek aren't a favor for women, but a better way of doing business and building strong families. **TAP**

Ellen Bravo, former director of 9to5, coordinates the Multi-State Working Families Consortium and is the author of Taking on the Big Boys.

Employers can do a lot by implementing effective practices such as flexible scheduling, which cost little and which strengthen the bottom line.

improved performance. Costs for family-friendly benefits pale besides the price tag for employee turnover. The business-advisory firm Deloitte & Touche, for instance, claims to have saved \$41.5 million in turnover costs as a result of family-flexible policies. Expenses per employee are less when low-wage workers leave the job, but the overall costs remain significant because of the high rate of turnover.

Consider SAS, a software company based in North Carolina. From its founding in 1976, company owner Jim Goodnight determined to create for every employee the same work environment that executives would want for themselves. The guy's not a flaky New Ager. He knows there's a link between a good work environment, healthy and happy workers, and satisfied customers. And the numbers bear him out: SAS has a 98 percent renewal rate for its services, and only 3 percent to 4 percent turnover in an industry whose average rate is 22 percent. SAS has never had a down year, even when high-tech companies were tanking across the country. Aside from the company's myriad benefits, the largest on-site child-care centers in the state, and employee involvement in decision making, what most impressed students in my graduate course was

What Do Women and Men Want?

Many of the same things—but our system contributes to gender conflicts over work, parenting, and marriage.

BY KATHLEEN GERSON

YOUNG WORKERS TODAY GREW UP IN RAPIDLY changing times: They watched women march into the workplace and adults develop a wide range of alternatives to traditional marriage. Now making their own passage to adulthood, these “children of the gender revolution” have inherited a far different world from that of their parents or grandparents. They may enjoy an expanded set of options, but they also face rising uncertainty about whether and how to craft a marriage, rear children, and build a career.

Considering the scope of these new uncertainties, it is understandable that social forecasters are pondering starkly different possibilities for the future. Focusing on a comparatively small recent upturn in the proportion of mothers who do not hold paid jobs, some are pointing to a “return to tradition,” especially among young women. Others see evidence of a “decline of commitment” in the rising number of young adults who are living outside a married relationship. However, the 120 in-depth interviews I conducted between 1998 and 2003 with young adults from diverse backgrounds make it clear that neither of these scenarios does justice to the lessons gleaned from growing up in changing families or to the strategies being crafted in response to deepening work/family dilemmas.

Keenly aware of the obstacles to integrating work and family life in an egalitarian way, most young adults are formulating a complicated set of ideals and fallback positions. Women and men largely share similar aspirations: Most wish to forge a lifelong partnership that combines committed work with devoted parenting. These ideals are tempered, however, by deep and realistic fears that rigid, time-demanding jobs and a dearth of child-care or family-leave options block the path to such a goal. Confronted with so many obstacles, young women and men today are pursuing fallback strategies as insurance in the all-too-likely event that their egalitarian ideals prove out of reach.

These second-best strategies are not only different but also at odds with each other. If a supportive, egalitarian partnership is not possible, most women prefer individual autonomy over becoming dependent on a husband in a traditional marriage.

Most men, however, if they can't have an equal balance between work and parenting, fall back on a neotraditional arrangement that allows them to put their own work prospects first and rely on a partner for most caregiving. The best hope for bridging this new gender divide lies in creating social policies that would allow new generations to create the families they want rather than the families they believe they must settle for.

GROWING UP IN CHANGING FAMILIES

In contrast to the conventional wisdom that children are best reared in families with a homemaking mother and bread-winning father, the women and men who grew up in such circumstances hold divided assessments. While a little more than half thought this was the best arrangement, a little less than half thought otherwise. When domesticity appeared to undermine their mother's satisfaction, disturb the household's harmony, or threaten its economic security, the adult children surveyed concluded that it would have been better if their mothers had pursued a sustained commitment to work or, in some instances, if their parents had separated.

Many of those who grew up in a single-parent home also express ambivalence. Slightly more than half wished their parents had stayed together, but close to half believed that a breakup, while not ideal, was better than continuing to live in a conflict-ridden home or with a neglectful or abusive parent. The longer-term consequences of a breakup had a crucial influence on the lessons children drew. The children whose parents got back on their feet and created better lives developed surprisingly positive outlooks on the decision to separate.

Those who grew up in dual-earner homes were least ambivalent about their parents' arrangements. More than three-fourths thought their parents had chosen the best option. Having two work-committed parents not only provided increased economic resources for the family but also promoted marriages that seemed more egalitarian and satisfying. Yet when the pressures of parents working long hours or coping with blocked opportunities and family-unfriendly workplaces took their toll, some children came to believe that having overburdened, time-stressed caretakers offset the advantages of living in a two-income household.

In short, the generation that grew up in this era of changing families is more focused on how well parents (and other caretakers) were able to meet the twin challenges of providing economic and emotional support rather than on what forms households took. Children were more likely to receive that support when their parents (or other guardians) could find secure and personally satisfying jobs, high-quality child care, and a supportive partnership that left room for a measure of personal autonomy.

NEW IDEALS, PERSISTING BARRIERS

So what do young adults want for themselves? Grappling with their own family experiences has led most young women and men to affirm the intrinsic importance of family life, but also



to search for ways to combine lasting commitment with a substantial measure of independence. Whether or not their parents stayed together, the overwhelming majority of young adults I interviewed said they hope to rear their children in the context of a lifelong intimate bond. They have certainly not given up on the value or possibility of commitment. It would be a mistake, however, to equate this ideal with a desire to be in a traditional relationship. While almost everyone wants to create a lasting marriage—or, in the case of same-sex couples, a “marriage-like” relationship—most also want to find an egalitarian partnership with considerable room for personal autonomy. Not surprisingly, three-fourths of those who grew up in dual-earner homes want their spouses to share breadwinning and caretaking; but so do more than two-thirds of those from more traditional homes, and close to nine-tenths of those with single parents. Four-fifths of women want egalitarian relationships, but so do two-thirds of the men. Whether reared by traditional, dual-earning, or single parents, the overwhelming majority of women and men want a committed bond where both paid work and family caretaking are shared.

Amy, an Asian American with two working parents, and Michael, an African American raised by a single mother, express essentially the same hopes:

AMY: I want a 50-50 relationship, where we both have the potential of doing everything—both of us working and dealing with kids. With regard to career, if neither has flexibility, then one of us will have to sacrifice for one period, and the other for another.

MICHAEL: I don’t want the ’50s type of marriage, where I come home and she’s cooking. She doesn’t have to cook; I like to cook. I want her to have a career of her own. I want to be able to set my goals, and she can do what she wants, too, because we both have this economic base and the attitude to do it. That’s what marriage is about.

Young adults today are affirming the value of commitment while also challenging traditional forms of marriage. Women and men both want to balance family and work in their own lives and balance commitment and autonomy in their relationships. Yet women and men also share a concern that—in the face of workplaces greedy for time and communities lacking adequate child care—insurmountable obstacles block the path to achieving these goals.

Chris, a young man of mixed ancestry whose parents shared work and caretaking, thus wonders: “I thought you could just have a relationship—that love and being happy was all that was

Most young women and men affirm the importance of family life, but search for ways to combine commitment with a substantial autonomy.

needed in life—but I’ve learned it’s a difficult thing. So that would be my fear: Where am I cutting into my job too much? Where am I cutting into the relationship too much? How do I divide it? And can it be done at all? Can you blend these two parts of your world?”

A NEW GENDER DIVIDE

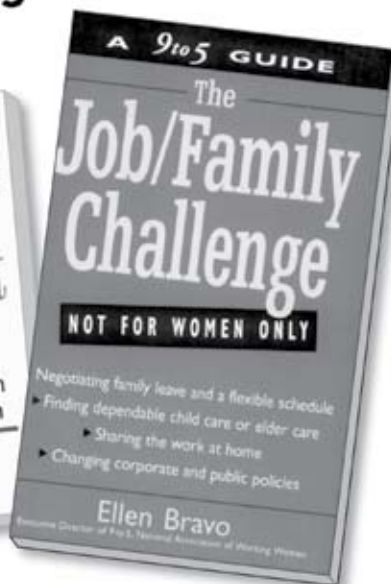
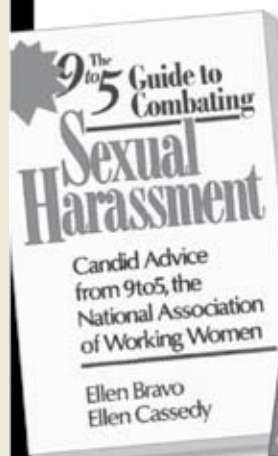
The rising conflicts between family and work make equal sharing seem elusive and possibly unattainable. Most young adults have concluded that they have little choice but to prepare for options that are likely to fall substantially short of their ideals. In the face of these barriers, women and men are formulating different—and opposing—fallback strategies.

In contrast to the media-driven message that more women are opting for domestic pursuits, the vast majority of women I interviewed say they are determined to seek financial and emotional self-reliance, even at the expense of a committed relationship. Most young women—regardless of class, race, or ethnicity—are reluctant to surrender their autonomy in a traditional marriage. When the bonds of marriage are so fragile, relying on a husband for economic security seems foolhardy. And if a relationship deteriorates, economic dependence on a man leaves few means of escape.

Danisha, an African American who grew up in an inner-city,



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working-class neighborhood, and Jennifer, who was raised in a middle-class, predominantly white suburb, agree:

DANISHA: Let's say that my marriage doesn't work. Just in case, I want to establish myself, because I don't ever want to end up, like, "What am I going to do?" I want to be able to do what I have to do and still be OK.

JENNIFER: I will have to have a job and some kind of stability before considering marriage. Too many of my mother's friends went for that—"Let him provide everything"—and they're stuck in a very unhappy relationship, but can't leave because they can't provide for themselves or the children they now have. So it's either welfare or putting up with somebody else's crap.

Hoping to avoid being trapped in an unhappy marriage or abandoned by an unreliable partner, almost three-fourths of women surveyed said they plan to build a non-negotiable base of self-reliance and an independent identity in the world of paid work. But they do not view this strategy as incompatible with the search for a life partner. Instead, it reflects their determination to set a high standard for a worthy relationship. Economic self-reliance and personal independence make it possible to resist "settling" for anything less than a satisfying, mutually supportive bond.

Maria, who grew up in a two-parent home in a predominantly white, working-class suburb and Rachel, whose Latino parents separated when she was young, share this view:

MARIA: I want to have this person to share [my] life with—[someone] that you're there for as much as they're there for you. But I can't settle.

RACHEL: I'm not afraid of being alone, but I am afraid of being with somebody who's a jerk. I want to get married and have children, but it has to be under the right circumstances, with the right person.

Maria and Rachel also agree that if a worthy relationship ultimately proves out of reach, then remaining single need not mean social disconnection. Kin and friends provide a support network that enlarges and, if needed, even substitutes for an intimate relationship:

MARIA: If I don't find [a relationship], then I cannot live in sorrow. It's not the only thing that's ultimately important. If I didn't have my family, if I didn't have a career, if I didn't have friends, I would be equally unhappy. [A relationship] is just one slice of the pie.

RACHEL: I can spend the rest of my life on my own, and as long as I have my sisters and my friends, I'm OK.

By blending support from friends and kin with financial self-sufficiency, most young women are pursuing a strategy of autonomy rather than placing their own fate or their children's in the hands of a traditional marriage. Whether or not this

strategy ultimately leads to marriage, it appears to offer the safest and most responsible way to prepare for the uncertainties of relationships and the barriers to men's equal sharing.

Young men, in contrast, face a different dilemma: Torn between women's pressures for an egalitarian partnership and their own desire to succeed—or at least survive—in time-demanding workplaces, they are more inclined to fall back on a modified traditionalism that recognizes a mother's right (and need) to work but puts a man's claim to a career first.

Despite growing up in a two-income home, Andrew distinguishes between a woman's "choice" to work and a man's "responsibility" to support his family: "I would like to have it be equal—just from what I was exposed to and what attracts me—but I don't have a set definition for what that would be like. I would be fine if both of us were working, but if she thought, 'At this point in my life, I don't want to work,' then it would be fine."

Rather than trying to change individual values, we need to provide the social supports that will allow young people to overcome work/family conflicts and realize their most cherished aspirations as partners, parents, and workers.

This model makes room for two earners, but it positions men as the breadwinning specialists. When push comes to shove, and the demands of work collide with the needs of children, this framework allows fathers to resist equal caretaking, even in a two-earner context. Although Josh's mother became too mentally ill to care for her children or herself, Josh plans to leave the lion's share of caretaking to his wife:

All things being equal, it [caretaking] should be shared. It may sound sexist, but if somebody's going to be the breadwinner, it's going to be me. First of all, I make a better salary, and I feel the need to work, and I just think the child really needs the mother more than the father at a young age.

Men are thus more likely to favor a fallback arrangement that retains the gender boundary between breadwinning and caretaking, even when mothers hold paid jobs. From young men's perspective, this modified but still gendered household offers women the chance to earn income and establish an identity at the workplace without imposing the costs of equal parenting on men. Granting a mother's "right" to work supports women's claims for independence, but does not undermine men's claim that their work prospects should come first. Acknowledging men's responsibilities at home provides for more involved fatherhood, but does not envision domestic equality. And making room for two earners provides a buffer against the difficulties of living on one income, but does not challenge men's position as the primary earner. Modified traditionalism thus appears to be a good compromise when the career costs of equality remain so high. Ultimately, however,

men's desire to protect work prerogatives collides with women's growing demand for equality and independence.

GETTING PAST THE WORK/FAMILY IMPASSE?

If the realities of time-demanding workplaces and missing supports for caregiving make it difficult for young adults to achieve the sharing, flexible, and more egalitarian relationships most want, then how can we get past this impasse? Clearly, most young women are not likely to answer this question by returning to patterns that fail to speak to either their highest ideals or their greatest fears. To the contrary, they are forming fallback strategies that stress personal autonomy, including the possibility of single parenthood. Men's most common responses to economic pressures and time-demanding jobs stress a different strategy—one that allows for two incomes but preserves men's claim on the most rewarding careers. Women and men are leaning in different directions, and their conflicting responses

are fueling a new gender divide. But this schism stems from the intensification of long-simmering work/family dilemmas, not from a decline of laudable values.

We need to worry less about the family values of a new generation and more about the institutional barriers that make them so difficult to achieve. Most young adults do not wish to turn back the clock, but they do hope to combine the more traditional value of making a lifelong commitment with the more modern value of having a flexible, egalitarian relationship. Rather than trying to change individual values, we need to provide the social supports that will allow young people to overcome work/family conflicts and realize their most cherished aspirations.

Since a mother's earnings and a father's involvement are both integral to the economic and emotional welfare of children (and also desired by most women and men), we can achieve the best family values only by creating flexible workplaces, ensuring equal economic opportunity for women, outlawing discrimination against all parents, and building child-friendly communities with plentiful, affordable, and high-quality child care. These long overdue policies will help new generations create the more egalitarian partnerships they desire. Failure to build institutional supports for new social realities will not produce a return to traditional marriage. Instead, following the law of unintended consequences, it will undermine marriage itself. **TAP**

*Kathleen Gerson is professor of sociology at New York University and president-elect of the Eastern Sociological Society. Author of *Hard Choices*, *No Man's Land*, and *The Time Divide* (with Jerry A. Jacobs), she is completing a new book *The Children of the Gender Revolution*.*

The Opt-Out Revolution Revisited

Women aren't foresaking careers for domestic life.
The ground rules just make it impossible to have both.

BY JOAN C. WILLIAMS

"I was tired of juggling. I was tired of feeling guilty. I was tired of holding the household reins in one hand. So I quit."

On the cover of *The New York Times Magazine* for October 26, 2003, a classy looking white woman with long, straight hair sits serenely with her baby, ignoring the ladder that climbs behind her. "Why Don't More Women Get to the Top?" asks the headline. "They Choose Not to."

Inside, *Times* columnist Lisa Belkin reported on interviews with eight women who graduated from Princeton and a handful of others, three of them with MBAs. All are "elite, successful women who can afford real choice," Belkin acknowledges, yet the *Magazine* does not evince any hesitation about making generalizations about "women" based on this group's decisions—to use Belkin's phrase—to "opt out."

Belkin's piece shifted the cultural frame for understanding women's workforce participation. Prior to her article, coverage typically focused on women who had "dropped out"—left the workforce altogether. A key insight of Belkin's was that many women who remain employed nonetheless step off the fast track, working part time, as independent contractors, or full time on the "mommy track." Belkin lumped these women with stay-at-home moms as evidence that many women who had not "dropped out" had, nonetheless, "opted out" of the fast track.

Belkin's success in naming and framing reshaped and refreshed a well-entrenched story line: that women are returning home as a matter of choice, the result of an internal psychological or biological "pull" rather than a workplace "push." This has been the interpretation of choice at *The New York Times* for more than half a century. The *Times* has been announcing and re-announcing the "opt out" trend since 1953—when it published the quote used as the epigram above.

THIS ARTICLE PRESENTS THE HIGHLIGHTS OF A FULL-LENGTH report analyzing 119 news stories printed between 1980 and 2006. The report demonstrates that many mothers do not opt out, but are instead pushed out by workplace inflexibility, failures of public policy, and workplace bias. For evidence, we

need look no further than Belkin's original article. The first woman discussed is Sally Sears, a former TV anchorwoman. Sears took nine years to quit, and "she did so with great regret." "I would have hung in there, except the days kept getting longer and longer," Sears explained. "My five-day, 50-hour week was becoming a 60-hour week."

So she quit, recognizing she lacked the fire in her belly, right? No, actually. Sears tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a part-time schedule. "They said it was all or nothing ... It was wrenching for me to leave Channel 2 ... I miss being the lioness in the newsroom ... [and i]t kills me that I'm not contributing to my 401(k) anymore." (This reference to the economic vulnerability of women who opt out is never followed up.)

In fact, the same all-or-nothing employer who refused to let Sears work part time later offered her part-time work—but without benefits, with no future, and at a much lower pay rate. The real message of Sears' story is that, despite her talents, she ended up doing virtually the same work she had always done, but in a low-paid, dead-end job. A more accurate headline for her story: "Talented Mother Pushed Out of a Good Job Into a Bad One; Economic Vulnerability Results."

THE OPT-OUT STORY LINE EXPOSED

The central thrust of the opt out story line is that women are "getting real" about their limitations and realizing that their values were more traditional than they thought they were, thus leading them to forego careers in favor of traditional motherhood. This story line has several major weaknesses.

In nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of the newspaper stories we analyzed, the overall tone was one of pulls rather than pushes—women following the pull toward home, with little mention of how the workplace pushes them out. Yet in a 2004 study by Pamela Stone and Meg Lovejoy, 86 percent of highly qualified women surveyed said work-related reasons, including workplace inflexibility, were key considerations in their decisions to quit. Only 6 percent of the articles we reviewed identified workplace pushes as key reasons why women left work.

The opt-out story line also discusses work/family conflict predominantly as an issue for professional women. More than

ELLEN WEINSTEIN

half (58 percent) of the women discussed in opt-out stories in *The New York Times* were in high-status or other traditionally masculine white-collar jobs; the number spiked to 100 percent in *The Washington Times*. This picture is misleading. Only about 8 percent of U.S. women hold high-level and other traditionally masculine jobs. And data shows that highly educated mothers are *more*—not less—likely to remain in the labor force than other women.

Distorted newspaper coverage can distort public policy. When I was talking with a Capitol Hill staffer several years ago, she told me that her office was not interested in public policies to help Americans balance work and family. “My boss is not interested in the problems of professional women,” she said—a misconception taken straight from the American press.

In addition, such stories often paint an unrealistically rosy picture about women’s chances of picking up their careers where they left off. More than one-third of the articles we reviewed explicitly adopt the view that women are being “realistic” when they recognize that they cannot “have it all” (i.e., what men have always had: both families and careers). In fact, it is opt-out articles that are unrealistic about women’s chances of opting back in. “My degree is my insurance policy,” one of Belkin’s interviewees states.

But this is an illusion. In a 2005 study for the Wharton Center for Leadership and Change, Monica McGrath and her coauthors surveyed 130 highly qualified women who had spent at least two years away from work. They found that, while 70 percent of those surveyed reported feeling positive about their decisions to leave the labor force, 50 percent felt “frustrated” when they tried to return to work, and 18 percent became “depressed.” Some respondents reported that employers interviewed them as if they had no work experience at all. More than one-third (36 percent) thought they might have to take a lower-level position than they had left. One particularly frustrated respondent said she was thinking of taking her MBA off her résumé. Said another, “Be prepared for the realization that in the business world your stepping-out time counts for less than zero ... [and] may make potential employers think you are not as reliable as other applicants.”

Another 2005 study by Christy Spivey published in the *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* found that women experienced a significant negative effect on wages even 20 years after a career interruption. This is a message that young women are not getting; the press is not telling them.

WOMEN’S ECONOMIC JEOPARDY

The opt-out story line presents the economic impact of mothers leaving the workforce as a short-term picture of giving up luxuries. No major paper would cover unemploy-

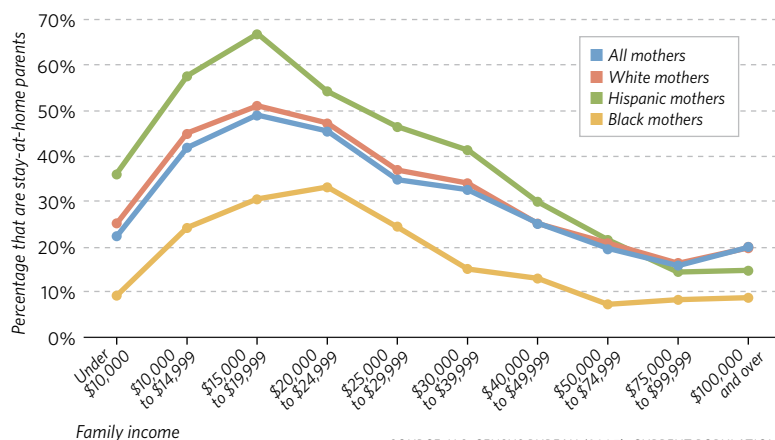
ment by having a reporter interview a handful of well-heeled acquaintances and muse on a personal period of unemployment. The idea is ludicrous; unemployment is a serious economic issue—except, in U.S. papers, the unemployment of mothers.

By contrast, in its April 2006 article entitled “A Guide to Womenomics,” the British magazine *The Economist* decried the fact that “women remain the world’s most under-utilized resource.” “To make full use of their national pools of female talent,” the article stated, “governments need to remove obstacles that make it hard for women to combine work with having children,” such as “parental leave and child care, allowing more flexible working hours, and reforming tax and social-security systems that create disincentives for women to work.”



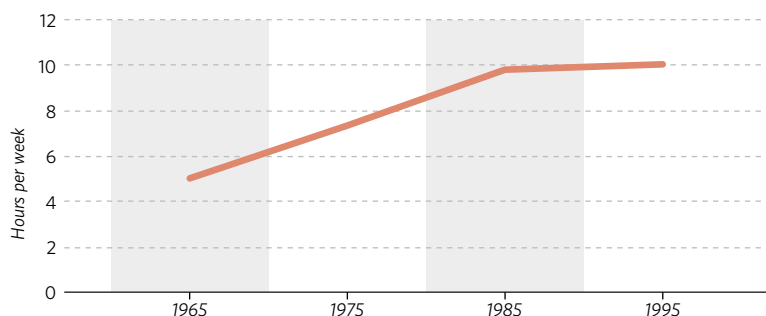
In sharp contrast, only 12 percent of the U.S. news articles we surveyed discuss the negative impact on the economy of that loss of talent. Instead, upbeat opt-out stories feature a steady diet of interviews with women *after* they opt out, and *before* any of them divorce, in which affluent women explain how they made ends meet by giving up expensive vacations, shopping sprees, and dining out. This story hardly describes the typical American family. Given that American women bring home an average of 28 percent of the family income, most families cannot make ends meet after a mother stops working simply by giving up luxuries.

STAY-AT-HOME MOTHERS BY RACE AND FAMILY INCOME, 2005



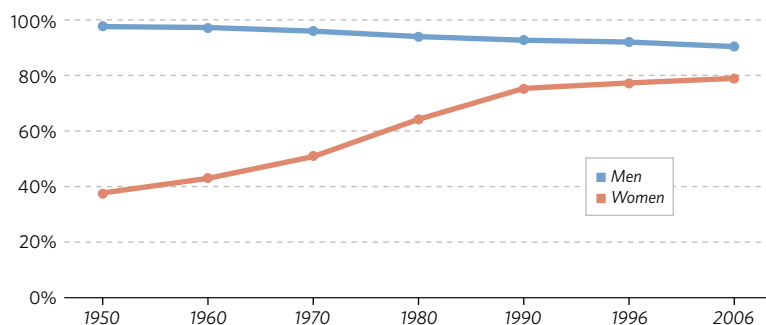
SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (2005). CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY, 2005 ANNUAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SUPPLEMENT (TABLE F68)

MEN'S AVERAGE WEEKLY HOURS OF HOUSEHOLD WORK



SOURCE: S.M. BIANCHI, M.A. MILKIE, L.C. SAYER, & J.P. ROBINSON (2000). IS ANYONE DOING HOUSEWORK? TRENDS IN THE GENDER DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD LABOR. SOCIAL FORCES, 79(1), 191-234; 207

PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE



SOURCE: L.M. CASPER, S.M. BIANCHI (2002). CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE AMERICAN FAMILY. THOUSAND OAKS, CA: SAGE PUBLICATIONS, P. 286

Very few of the 119 articles we surveyed linked women's opting out with long-term economic vulnerability. In a society in which "displaced homemakers" incomes fall very sharply after divorce, only two out of 119 articles mentioned *any* divorced women. Yet, if past trends are any indication, close to half of opt-out women will end up in this position, with not only their own long-term economic futures in jeopardy, but also those of

their children (who are statistically less likely than other children to reach the education level or class status of their fathers).

THE GREAT AMERICAN SPEED-UP

A final shortcoming of the opt-out story line is its failure to acknowledge the impact of new, sped-up ideals of mothering and of work in America. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of the articles in our survey refer to women's return to "traditional" roles. Yet recent studies report that much of what these "new traditionalist" mothers stay home to do is not traditional. Sociologists Annette Lareau and Sharon Hays have documented the rise of an "ideology of intensive mothering" in professional and managerial families—the belief that each child needs to be driven to countless practices, play dates, tutoring, and other enrichment activities.

Newspapers' confident assertions of "new traditionalism" also erase the newness of the all-or-nothing workplace. What many opt-out women are rejecting is not work per se, but "extreme jobs." Americans work longer hours than in virtually any other industrialized country, and American men's working hours have risen so sharply since 1980, that now nearly 40 percent of college-educated men work 50-plus hours a week.

The Great American Speed-Up at Work—like the Great American Speed-Up at Home—is not traditional. In one-opt out article we reviewed (printed in *The Union Leader* of Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1995), a mother who left a corporate job for freelance work told the paper that her guiding principle was, "I like to be with my family for dinner." This is a goal virtually any Company Man of the 1950s could attain.

ACCURATE STORIES THE PRESS SHOULD REPORT

Newspapers could easily replace the eternal drone of opt-out stories with three new story lines—ones that more accurately reflect real data.

First, newspapers can describe how American women are pushed out of good jobs by workplace inflexibility. The American economy has lots of good, long-hours jobs, but part time jobs tend to be hard to find, dead end, and low paid. "I felt like I threw away my career with the placenta,"

said one lawyer who returned to work part time after giving birth. The economic penalty associated with part-time work is much harsher in the United States than in Europe. Women who work part time here earn 21 percent less per hour than full timers, a penalty seven times higher than in Sweden and more than twice as high as in the UK. On average, people who work 44 hours per week in the United States earn more than

twice what those working 34 hours per week earn, according to Warren Farrell in a 2005 *New York Times* editorial. All this tends to drive professional and managerial couples into neotraditional roles, as the “parenting vacuum” produced by husbands’ absence is filled by women who opt out. “He has always said to me, ‘You can do whatever you want to do,’” says one respondent in Stone and Lovejoy’s 2004 study, “But he’s not there to pick up any load.”

In working-class families, parents tend to “tag team,” where mom works one shift and dad works a different shift, thereby minimizing the need for child care, which is expensive and hard to find. Yet, when combined with workplace inflexibility, tag-teaming can be problematic. If either parent is ordered to work overtime, the family has to choose between mom’s job and dad’s job—in a context in which the family usually needs both jobs to make ends meet. Similar problems arise if a child or elderly relative is sick. Many working-class families are one sick child away from being fired (the title of my report on working class families, at www.worklifelaw.org). Not surprisingly, given that many tag-team couples rarely see each other awake, tag-team families also have sky-high levels of divorce, with a divorce rate three to six times the national average.

after she returned from maternity leave. Her first week back at work, her supervisor told her to stop disrupting the office when she showed her baby pictures. Her hours were closely scrutinized, although, as is common in off-site sales jobs, her coworkers’ were not. When Walsh had to leave to take her son, who had persistent ear infections, to the doctor, she was required to sign in and out and to make up every minute of work she missed, despite a policy allowing for unlimited sick leave. Her supervisor threw a phone book at her, telling her to find a pediatrician open after business hours. In her 2003 case against her employer, National Computer Systems, Inc., a federal court upheld a jury verdict of \$625,000.

The Center for WorkLife Law has identified more than 800 cases of “family responsibilities discrimination” or FRD. Such cases increased nearly 400 percent during the last decade. FRD plaintiffs are more likely to win than employment discrimination plaintiffs generally, in part because lawyers litigate these as family values cases. Potential liability is substantial: More than 75 cases have involved verdicts or settlements of \$100,000 or more, with the highest individual verdict at \$11.65 million and the highest class recovery at \$49 million.

The argument that women opt out rests on the assumption

Lack of adequate non-family child care drives American women out of the workforce and into economic vulnerability. That’s why most other advanced countries provide workplace flexibility and socially subsidized child care.

A second alternative story line for the press is how the failures of U.S. public policy force many women out of the workforce. Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of the articles we surveyed mention that the high cost and/or the low quality of child care drove mothers out of work. Are these stories about women getting what they want, or stories about the systematic de-skilling of American women (many of them educated at public expense) due to a lack of supports for working families? Lack of adequate non-family child care plays a central role in driving American women out of the workforce and into economic vulnerability. That’s why most other industrialized countries have been so attentive to creating systems that provide families with both good options for non-family child care and workplace flexibility so workers can care for their own children. Few, if any, articles in American newspapers mention the role of U.S. public policy in creating the unattractive choices that cause many mothers to leave work.

A third new story line is one explaining how many women leave the workforce because of workplace bias against mothers. Perhaps the most damaging part of the opt-out story line is that it excuses gender discrimination under the rhetoric of “choice.” Lawsuits brought by women who hit the maternal wall offer vivid, compelling stories of women who did not opt out; they were pushed out by stereotyping and gender discrimination. Take Shireen Walsh, a top salesperson with outstanding reviews who encountered a sharp change in working conditions

that we are talking about mothers’ choices, not systemic discrimination. Yet choice and discrimination are not mutually exclusive: Consider the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. Under it, gay soldiers do have a choice—they can remain closeted and keep their jobs, or they can come out and get fired. Yet their choice, like mothers’ choices, occur within the context of discrimination. Many mothers quit when their careers stall after they are told that mothers belong at home with their children; or when they find that disabled men are offered light duty but pregnant women are not; or when the quality of their assignments declines sharply when they return from maternity leave; the examples go on and on.

News stories about family responsibilities discrimination have spiked in the months since the Center for WorkLife Law released a July 2006 report on the rise of FRD litigation. One was an article by Lisa Belkin, the very reporter who coined the language of opting out, in which she described FRD (and dubbed it “Fred”). Recent press interest may signal receptiveness to new story lines around women and employment. Let’s hope so. **TAP**

Joan C. Williams is Distinguished Professor of Law and director of the Center for WorkLife Law at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law. For the full-length report on which this article is based, “‘Opt Out’ or Pushed Out?: How the Press Covers Work/Family Conflict,” visit www.worklifelaw.org.

Responsive Workplaces

The business case for employment that values fairness and families

BY JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN

MORE AND MORE, WORKING PARENTS HAVE DUAL—and dueling—responsibilities on the job and at home. Yet today's workplace often seems stuck in a time warp, modeled for Ward and June Cleaver when the reality feels more like television's *Survivor*.

Some employers have adapted and made their workplaces responsive to working parents. Flexible scheduling that considers employee preference and paid time off, for example, have helped those who constantly juggle work and home. Often, such measures have benefited the employers, too, demonstrating that businesses can do well by doing good.

A business case for work/life balance is important, because commerce is not built on altruism. But will such evidence prompt all firms to rush to implement responsive workplaces and become “high road” employers? Hardly. As long as companies can make a profit riding the low road, many will feel no compulsion to change. Further, outmoded assumptions—that low-wage workers are expendable, for example, despite research showing the significant costs of losing and replacing these workers—are hard to change. Together, these realities result in workplace practices that collide with the nation's “family values.” If Wal-Mart mandates a shift without notice, what happens to the worker's family when the 10-year-old must make dinner and tuck in the toddler? And what does it say about family values when parents lose wages—or even jobs—if they take a day to care for a sick loved one?

Government has an important role in fostering responsive workplaces for workers of all incomes. It should partner with business to make flexible scheduling commonplace, set minimum paid-leave standards, and foster other family-friendly supports. After all, the job of government is to sustain our nation's productivity and to put in place policies more focused on the next quarter century than on the next quarterly return.

WORKING PARENTS AND WORKING CONDITIONS

For the 65 percent of American families that have two working parents (or an employed single householder), getting work hours, child care, and (often) elder care to align is an essential part of the balancing act. For far too many of these families, success depends on the luck of the draw.

Because the United States has not set a minimum standard

for work leave, private employers determine whether and to what extent employees receive paid leave for illness or for parental, vacation, or personal time. Many employers do provide some paid leave on their own: About 80 percent of working parents have some paid leave. Many others get very little, and 20 percent receive none at all. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) mandates that a worker be permitted up to 12 weeks of leave due to serious illness or the arrival of a new child with no risk of losing the job—but the leave is unpaid, and workers at firms with fewer than 50 employees are excluded by law. Not surprisingly, the lowest-earning workers face the greatest challenges. More than half of working parents with below-poverty income have no paid leave at all, and one in three poor working parents cannot afford to take the FMLA's unpaid leave when a new child arrives.

The constraints most workers face while on the job can also stress family life. Only 28 percent of all full-time wage and salary workers have flexible schedules that allow them to vary the time they begin or end work. Even fewer lower-wage workers have flexible hours, and people who seek part-time work in order to fulfill family responsibilities often miss out entirely on paid leave and other benefits.

These working conditions matter. Worker well-being contributes to business productivity. Less appreciated is the fact that child well-being is influenced by a parent's working conditions. Parental engagement can influence a student's grades, a toddler's development, a sick child's return to health. Indeed, it's no exaggeration to say that a responsive workplace today can contribute to positive outcomes for the next generation of workers.

BUSINESSES WITH BEST PRACTICES

So what do some really responsive workplaces look like? Flexible time that responds to employees' needs can include compressed workweeks, job sharing, telecommuting, and more. Some newer approaches are being used for workers at all wages:

- Online scheduling allows employees to request preferred work hours and swap shifts with colleagues. JetBlue and J.C. Penney are among firms using electronic “kiosk” scheduling.

- “Eliminating the clock” is the end goal of Best Buy's new human-resource strategy, which gives employees in the company's Minneapolis headquarters nearly total autonomy over their workday schedules; their performance is measured by results

and productivity instead of hours. *BusinessWeek* reports that the company plans to expand the strategy of letting workers set their own schedules to its frontline retail workers this year.

■ Paid leave, child-care assistance, and other benefits are par for the course at some model companies. Ikea, which offers paid sick days, maternity/paternity leave, and time off for child adoption, also provides health insurance, tuition assistance, and a generous 401(k) match. Deloitte & Touche offerings include paid parental leave and a five-year sabbatical plan to extend time off for training and child rearing. And Abbott Laboratories offers on-site child care to its Illinois headquarters staff.

THE BUSINESS CASE

Many employers that offer workplace flexibility say that these practices improve their bottom line—and research bears them out, in the form of fewer employee absences, lower health-care costs, and higher rates of worker retention.

Employees offered flexible scheduling, for example, report lower stress than those without flexibility. Highly stressed workers create health expenditures nearly 50 percent greater than those with low stress. And the Centers for Disease Control found that stressed workers are also more likely to be absent from or tardy to work—and to make plans to quit their jobs.

Workplace flexibility also enhances productivity. A Watson Wyatt study found a small increase in shareholder returns due to flexible work arrangements. One factor was a “surge in productivity” by workers using their time more efficiently; another was an increase in employee retention. It can cost 150 percent of a salaried worker’s pay for a company to find, hire, and train a new person. And 73 percent of employees with high flexibility—versus 54 percent of those with low flexibility—will likely be at the same job the next year. For hourly workers, turnover costs amount to 50 to 75 percent of annual pay.

The impact of flexibility on engagement, retention, and productivity may be greater for low-wage and hourly employees. A report by Corporate Voices for Working Families notes that “the lack or absence of even the least amount of flexibility can mean the difference between keeping and losing one’s job, economic security or poverty.”

These and other findings confirm that family-friendly policies make good business sense as well as good social policy. And much can be accomplished at little or no cost to a company. Responsive scheduling—often requiring a simple change in procedures, not new hires—can make a huge difference to families with little effect on the bottom line.

Paid leave and supports such as child care carry costs, but these costs come with benefits, too. Paid sick days prevent contagion, paid family leave significantly enhances retention, and child care can improve worker productivity. A 1998 study calculated that unstable child care was costing employers about \$3 billion yearly. After inflation, that tab may be more like \$4 billion today.

So, if family-friendly practices are good for business, are most employers offering paid family leave and child care? Far from it. Only 8 percent of workers in the private sector get these

assistance programs from their bosses. Not surprisingly, those receiving higher wages are twice as likely to get help from work, even though lower-wage workers are the most in need.

THE GOVERNMENT ROLE

Given the paucity of private-sector coverage, it seems clear that our elected leaders must do more to address the challenge of getting work to balance with family responsibilities. Government can set minimum standards for certain working conditions; just as significantly, it can partner with business to recognize best practices, provide technical assistance, and develop tools for local promotion. Indeed, the public sector is often a model. The federal government allows 13 paid sick days a year, and most states are nearly as generous. Nine out of 10 workers in state and local governments have paid sick days, but not even half of those working in the private sector do. And workers covered by collective-bargaining agreements are much more likely to participate in paid sick-leave programs than those without union representation.

Some state and local governments have taken the lead in moving private employers forward. In California, a new law relies on the state’s temporary disability insurance program to fund up to six weeks of paid family medical leave, with wages replaced at 55 percent of salary up to a cap. The program is financed through employee contributions. Last November, voters in San Francisco approved a referendum ensuring up to nine paid sick days for workers. In Florida, a 2006 statute authorizes the governor to institute a “family friendly workplace initiative” to identify, recognize, and publicize the practices of the state’s most family-friendly employers.

In Congress, meantime, a bipartisan Senate Caucus on Children, Work and Family was launched in January to “bring national attention to the ‘kitchen table’ issues that impact ... families and our economic security” and promote “policy solutions to improve the lives of all Americans.”

Each of these efforts represents a good start. Ideally, they’ll spur national, state, and local conversations that should include efforts to establish the following:

Paid leave. Now pending or expected soon in Congress are several measures that could dramatically improve things for working parents. The Healthy Families Act, for example, would guarantee seven paid sick days a year for most full-time workers (and a pro rata amount for part timers) nationwide. Other proposals would mandate paid family and medical leave, with between six and 12 weeks of benefits. A national nonprofit group, Take Back Your Time, just launched a vigorous campaign to push for congressional hearings on annual leave. Congress should take action on each of these important initiatives in this session.

Child-care funding. Employers will argue that they can’t afford bigger-ticket benefits like child care (and parental leave). If that’s true, then it’s high time for business leaders to make this case to Uncle Sam. Corporations should advocate these supports, just as many have gotten behind universal health care. For every seven children federally eligible for public child-

care subsidies, only one receives assistance. Business should take a lead in securing more funds for the Child Care Development Block Grant, which has essentially been flat-funded since 2002—leaving fewer working parents with help.

Stable schedules. Millions of workers hold jobs that seem anti-family because the time at work is erratic. Mandatory overtime, shifting schedules, and last-minute demands can throw child-care arrangements, not to mention parenting time, into a tailspin. The implications of these destabilizing work conditions are poorly understood. An authoritative body like the National Academy of Sciences should undertake a full review and appropriate legislative remedies should be pursued.

Part-time equity. Part-time workers, even those with the same duties as full timers, tend to have the least access to family-friendly options. Public policies could help here, as they have in the European Union, to ensure that part-time employees are not discriminated against and have greater advancement opportunities, for example—and to otherwise improve the quality and rewards of part-time work. Passing the Part-time and Temporary Workers Benefits Act, now before Congress, would take on these important issues.

Recognition for best practices. Congress could offer competitive grants to spur state and local efforts to make their work-

places more responsive. Another interesting model is a Wage and Benefits Metric developed by the Northwest Area Foundation, which allows community leaders to assess the quality of jobs offered by a company—so when a new company comes to town, for example, there's a way to determine if it deserves a tax credit based on the quality of jobs it will produce. This new online tool (www.jobmetric.nwaf.org) could be expanded to measure whether the employer offers a responsive workplace, and communities could use it when choosing between employers competing for government contracts or credits.

Businesses that are family friendly can improve their bottom line. That's essential. But it's not enough to ensure that workers, particularly lower-wage workers, will have the working conditions they need to meet responsibilities on the job and at home. Government should partner with business to foster responsive workplaces and should set minimum standards for working conditions that include paid leave. That way our nation can sustain not only its productivity but also what it values most: families and fairness. **TAP**

Jodie Levin-Epstein is deputy director of the Center for Law and Social Policy. For an expanded report on this subject, see "Getting Punched: The Job and Family Clock" at www.clasp.org.

SETTING A LOW BAR

Every year, *Working Mother* magazine announces its much-anticipated "100 Best Companies." Employers leap to publicize their inclusion on the list, and it's routinely a best-selling issue. But is the "100 Best"—and similar lists published by other magazines and organizations—much more than public relations?

Large companies are already required by the Family and Medical Leave Act to provide 12 weeks of unpaid leave. In addition to meeting federal requirements, most businesses make the list with low- or no-cost policies and perks such as flex time, child-care resource directories, lactation rooms, and additional unpaid leave. Benefits such as paid family leave or free or reduced-cost child care are much rarer.

Most such "best employers" lists are compiled using self-reported data. While *Working Mother* says the information is fact checked, most companies do not make public the information the magazine says it examines, so there is no way to independently verify it. The magazine assigns a specific score and rank to every company that applies, and those numbers are kept private. "That enables them to

go back and do some work without being publicly embarrassed," says Suzanne Riss, editor-in-chief of *Working Mother*. "We're not trying to say one company is better than the next."

Working Mother says an important criterion for selection is advancement of women (the company's "workforce profile"). Of the 18 firms in *Working Mother's* "Hall of Fame," most have only two or three women board members. The average "Hall of Fame" board of directors is more than 80 percent male. And on its 2005 list, Allstate, American Express, and General Mills were named top companies for women of color. At each, women of color made up 30 percent of newly hired hourly workers, but 0 percent of new executives.

It can be difficult to determine whether all employees are actually encouraged to take advantage of family-friendly policies. When the *Harvard Business Review* surveyed women college graduates, 35 percent of them thought they would be penalized for doing so. When Martha Burk examined "best employers" lists in her 2005 book, *Cult of Power*, she found that often "women get to the companies

and find it's all so much hype," she says.

In fairness, several companies that appear on these lists are above average. The multinational accounting behemoth Ernst & Young was recently lauded for its efforts to encourage men to take advantage of its progressive family leave policies. But in its profile of female board members and high-level managers, Ernst & Young's numbers look remarkably similar to the rest of the "Best Companies."

"The list-makers cherry-pick the data," Burk says. "If they had a stringent external standard, they'd never be able to give any awards." The list makers and their big business honorees enable each other. Firms can get credit for low- or no-cost options—which their female employees may be reluctant to take—and the magazines get advertising dollars. "We don't want to have a list that no one wants to apply to because they're going to be embarrassed," Riss says. "This is a list companies feel comfortable applying to. There's a lot of prestige attached to it." It's a win-win situation, but the winners don't necessarily include mothers in the workforce.

— ANN FRIEDMAN

Atlantic Passages

How Europe supports working parents and their children.

BY JANET C. GORNICK

MANY RICH COUNTRIES DO A far better job than the United States does of supporting workers who are balancing the competing demands of employment and parenthood. Several European countries, especially in northern and western Europe, provide extensive work/family reconciliation policies—including paid family leave, public early-childhood education and care, and working-time measures that raise the quality and availability of reduced-hour work. The European Union puts a common floor under several of these national standards.

Parents in much of Europe have access to multiple forms of paid family leave, for both mothers and fathers. Equally important, these programs provide wage replacement, usually financed by social insurance, in order to spread the costs between women and men, across generations, and among enterprises. Social-insurance financing also minimizes employers' resistance to hiring young workers, especially women, who they anticipate will be leave-takers.

The Nordic countries—including Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden—provide especially generous family leave rights and benefits. Most new parents have the right to take approximately one year of leave, and they receive about two-thirds or more of their pay. Family leave policies in the Nordic countries also offer parents substantial flexibility. Denmark and Sweden allow parents to take their allotted leaves in increments until their children are eight years old. Norway and Sweden allow parents to combine pro-rated leaves with part-time employment, and Finland and Norway permit parents to use portions of their leave benefits to purchase private child care

instead. Recent reforms add incentives for fathers to take leaves, to encourage more gender-egalitarian usage.

Across Europe, publicly supported child care serves a large proportion of infants and toddlers while their parents are working for pay. In Denmark, for example, three-quarters of one- and two-year-olds are now served in publicly financed child-care settings; half of the children in this age range are in public care in Sweden and more than a third in Norway. In many European countries—including Belgium, France, and Italy—nearly all children from age three to the

***Family-friendly policies are good economics.
The most productive countries in the world have
comprehensive work/family social benefits.***

start of primary school are enrolled in full-day preschools. Throughout Europe, public policy measures assure that early childhood education and care are affordable. Parents typically pay income-scaled fees for infant and toddler care, while educationally oriented preschools (for children age three and older) are usually free for all families.

Parents are further aided by a package of working-time measures, some of which are required by the European Union. European countries set their standard weekly work hours individually and, across western and northern Europe today, full-time work is generally defined as between 35 and 39 weekly hours. All EU-member countries are required to grant workers a minimum of four weeks of paid time off each year. Furthermore, EU law requires that all member countries ensure part-time workers pro-rated

pay and benefits comparable to what full-time workers receive, in order to make shorter-hour work more economically feasible. In addition, since 2000, several countries—including Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom—have granted workers new rights to request work-schedule changes; employers may refuse, but their refusals are subject to public review.

These work/family measures are provided alongside universal health insurance, which adds crucial economic support for families, and gives workers flexibility when seeking employment that best meets their families' needs. All told, the comprehensive work/family policy packages operating in several European countries offer parents considerable latitude in allocating their time between paid work and care, and indemnify them against substantial fluctuations in disposable income.

Generous work/family policies are good for parents, children, and worker productivity, and especially benefit

lower-income workers who tend to have less bargaining power and cannot afford to pay for help privately. Public systems equalize access and affordability, across family types and throughout the income spectrum, leading to outcomes that are more equitable than what market-based systems produce.

Moreover, expansive work/family policies are compatible with good economic outcomes. Consider GDP-per-hour-worked, a powerful indicator of productivity. The six top-ranked countries in the world are European countries with comprehensive work/family policies, including France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Norway. Furthermore, the World Economic Forum's Competitiveness Index includes, among the top five countries globally, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland—three countries with extensive work/family policies.

In recent decades, many European countries have restructured their social policies to trim costs and improve economic outcomes. However, programs that support workers with family responsibilities—including paid leave, child care, and rights to high-quality reduced-hour work—were singled out for protection and growth rather than cutbacks, both by the EU and in many individual countries. Clearly, high-income industrialized countries can perform productively and competitive-

ly while granting workers rights and benefits that recognize the realities of family life. **TAP**

Janet C. Gornick is professor of political science and sociology at the Graduate Center, and professor of political science at Baruch College, at the City University of New York. She is also director of the Luxembourg Income Study and coauthor of Families That Work: Policies for Reconciling Parenthood and Employment.

supports. (In fact, Americans harbor such idealized views about marital salvation that they marry and remarry at rates much higher than their counterparts in other industrialized countries.) Fathers involved in the details of raising children say that the inability to rearrange work schedules to care for a sick child, attend a school function, or coach soccer practice is a major nuisance. Others complain about low wages, which force them to work more hours, or mandatory overtime as reasons they can't spend time with their children. Lack of paid sick leave or paid paternity leave are further impediments, and many fathers say they want more paid vacation time to spend with their families. As a professor of sociology and family researcher, I've been studying fathers for 20 years, and I have come to the conclusion that workplace supports, not "family values," are key to getting men more involved in family life.

What About Fathers?

Marriage, work, and family in men's lives

BY SCOTT COLTRANE

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION AND its allies like to tell us that Americans have forgotten about marriage, and that Americans have stopped caring about fathers. As good as it is to bring attention to the needs of fathers, on both points they are simply wrong: Americans believe very strongly in marriage, and rather than devaluing fathers, they are increasingly likely to adopt extremely high expectations for them. American men continue to provide for their families and are doing more housework and child care than ever before, but because men and women face so many economic and practical obstacles, marriage has indeed become more fragile than it was in the past.

In response to these changing times, advocates on the right have resorted to religious moralizing and public relations campaigns touting the benefits of traditional marriage and family values. Bush's family policies assume that pro-marriage public service announcements, billboards, and slick TV ads, along with faith-based counseling, will convince more (heterosexual) Americans to get and stay married, and that marriage will save our troubled youth and protect American society from

decay. Conservative think tanks like The Heritage Foundation and the National Fatherhood Initiative repeat drumbeat messages about the benefits of marriage and fatherhood, as if Americans needed convincing. Calling fatherlessness a "social evil" and the "engine driving our worst social problems," they promote father presence as a panacea for poverty, failure in school, emotional and behavioral problems among boys, premarital sex and pregnancy among girls, suicide, child abuse, and even social inequality. But they typically define father presence in vague and nostalgic terms—as in marrying the mother and serving as a "masculine role model"—rather than taking responsibility for routine, everyday tasks like changing diapers or doing laundry. Wade Horn, former president of the National Fatherhood Initiative and now assistant secretary for children and families in the Bush administration, warned fathers against acting like mothers, saying the "new nurturing father ideal," in which a man "shares equally in all childrearing activities from the moment of birth," is "of course, nonsense."

But working fathers' problems are not, by and large, problems of values but of

OPINION POLLS CONSISTENTLY SHOW that the vast majority of Americans think of marriage as an equal partnership and endorse the ideals of sharing decision making, housework, child care, and paid work. According to national surveys conducted since the 1960s, the primary shift in American attitudes toward equality in marriage occurred decades ago, with small fluctuations since the early 1980s on specific issues. For example, in 1961 only 52 percent of Americans reported that husbands and wives should share household tasks according to individual interests and abilities (rather than according to "men's work" and "women's work"), but that percentage jumped to 89 percent by 1978 and rose to 94 percent by 1996. Similarly, in 1961, 67 percent of Americans were reporting that husbands and wives should have equal voice in making family decisions, but that percentage went up to 89 percent by 1978 and rose to 93 percent by 1996.

Contrary to the "family values" rhetoric of the right, recent studies show that marriages with more equal sharing are, in fact, the most successful. For example, couples in which only the man—or the woman—is the breadwinner are more likely to divorce. Contrary

to stereotypes about traditional family roles, not only are educated women with steady incomes more likely to marry and stay married, but men who do more housework are also more likely than others to avoid divorce. Whereas American fathers from earlier eras were celebrated for their breadwinning, moral leadership, or stern discipline, contemporary fathers are increasingly valued for routine activities formerly considered “women’s work.”



fifths as much on weekends. Thus, men in two-parent households now spend more time with their children than at any time for which we have comparable data. These trends also reveal that there are fewer households with highly unequal divisions of family labor and more households with equal divisions than ever before. Similar trends in labor sharing are evident across Europe.

In large part, men’s increased contributions to family work are a direct result of women’s employment. Studies show that employed women do one-third less family work than non-employed women. Employed men, like women, also do more housework when they work fewer hours. Similarly, fathers who work less and have more flexible work schedules do more child care than others. In addition, overall work hours (paid labor plus unpaid family labor) are now about equal for men and women in dual-earner couples, whereas in the 1980s and 1990s, women in dual-earner households disproportionately shouldered the burden of a double workday.

while fathers tend to increase their job hours after a birth. Studies also show that women are more likely than men to change work schedules and to feel distracted and less productive at work because of family matters. In these situations, dual-earner American couples are forced to find private solutions to work/family dilemmas because—unlike most European nations—our leaders have assumed that work/family balance is not a public issue.

There are some model programs in industrialized countries. Parents in Denmark are eligible to take up to 52 weeks—a whole year—to care for seriously ill children with two-thirds wage replacement. In Norway, parents of children with more routine illnesses are paid substantial wage replacement for an average of 10 days a year. Men tend to have higher earnings than women, and because women are therefore more likely to withdraw from the labor force and men are more likely to increase their work hours, some European programs focus on ways to encourage fathers to use

Fathers can be genuine role models for their sons and daughters when they have the time to care for them and when they have the wages to support them.

Perhaps as a result, research shows that men are doing significantly more family work. Since the 1960s, the time American women spend on housework has declined by about one-third, whereas men’s contributions have doubled. Overall, experts estimate that men’s relative contribution to routine indoor housework is now about half that of women’s. Even more change has occurred in men’s performance of child care, with fathers now spending three times as many hours on child care as they did in the 1960s, and performing a wider range of tasks. Women’s time in child care has also increased, but differences between men and women are declining. Surveys show that fathers are available to their children about three-fourths as much as mothers, interacting about two-thirds as often on weekdays, but more than four-

This is good news for gender equality, but raises new problems for balancing work and family commitments and meeting the needs of children. Men, like women, now report that their workplace circumstances make it difficult to meet family obligations. For example, both woman and men who work in occupations dominated by men enjoy fewer programs designed to lessen work/family conflicts. As men’s and women’s paid and family work patterns have become more similar, so have their solutions to balancing the work/family tension: Both men and women in dual-earner households with children are more likely than those without children to refuse a promotion or decline extra work hours. There are, of course, still differences. Mothers are more likely than men to cut back on work after having children,

leave benefits. Not only are both parents eligible for paid parental leave in Nordic nations, but fathers are entitled to special use-or-lose “daddy days.” Such programs have increased fathers’ leave-taking dramatically.

Here in the United States, however, we have been slow to adopt such policies. Although U.S. family-leave programs like the Family and Medical Leave Act have increased available options, because they are unpaid and available to only those working in large firms, they have not substantially relieved the burden on working fathers and mothers. What’s more, even when these workplace initiatives are open to men, they are often only used by women, with men reluctant to take parental leave or to acknowledge that they need benefits to care for their

children. Men, however, should not be afraid to use these resources. On-site child care, paid family leave, paid sick time, affordable health insurance, flexible scheduling, and home-based work opportunities relieve work/family stress and increase employee job satisfaction. Such policies increase workers' sense of balance, instill motivation, reduce absenteeism, minimize employee turnover, and lower employer recruitment and retraining costs. Although electing these benefits sometimes carries the stigma of joining a less-serious "mommy track" for women, when men take time off to tend to children, they often report that employers see them as stable "family men" with management or partner potential.

Fathers need federally supported programs that acknowledge and appreci-

ate the everyday details of parenting. Workplace policies focused on supporting men's connections to and responsibilities for children are much more important than family values media campaigns promoting abstract ideals of marriage and fatherhood. Fathers can be genuine role models for their sons and daughters when they have the time to care for them and when they have the wages to support them. Men will be better fathers and spouses when they have the workplace policy supports to be equal partners. **TAP**

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the trade-offs in family time it would demand.

Of course, expressing a desire to put family first isn't the same as achieving that goal. In their quest for a more gender-equal, less frantic work/family life, today's young parents have hit a few brick walls. They need help, and public policy advocates have an opportunity to draw this generation into the movement for progressive family policy. With its rejection of traditional gender roles, this generation could provide a fresh perspective on balancing the responsibilities of parenting and working.

Nonetheless, stubborn obstacles to making America more family friendly remain. To begin with, underlying even the most sincere desire to figure out how to raise a family in which mom and dad both work and can both spend quality time with their young children is the deep-rooted belief that it's up to each and every set of parents to figure it out for themselves. In America, child rearing is a private responsibility, not a social one, which still means that the buck stops with mom. There is no "village" to provide a helping hand in raising children, and it's not at all clear that parents think there should be. Most polls show that parents are more supportive of better regulation of child-care providers than they are of a government-funded universal system.

Another reason we haven't embraced the universal child care and paid family leave that young parents in every other industrialized nation take for granted is that upper-middle- and upper-income families don't have a child-care problem. Why is this an obstacle? Because even the most well-off parents in America often think of themselves as part of the middle class, so their ability to secure child care keeps them from fully understanding that the *real* middle class is desperate for help. This well-off, well-educated minority exerts inordinate influence in our democracy, from the voting booth to the beltway. This socioeconomic distortion was brought home in a conversation I had with a senator's senior staffer. As I was describing how the cost of child care

The Mother of All Issues

What it will take to put work and family on the national agenda.

BY TAMARA DRAUT

GENERATION X HAS GROWN up. Its members and their personalities consumed our nation's attention in the 1980s, when it seemed this generation would go down in history as a group of spoiled slackers. Then in the late 1990s, the generation written off as a bunch of yahoos became the generation behind Yahoo. Now age 26 to 40, the generation that once was the subject of so much self-righteous finger-wagging is the core of America's young families.

The average age a woman in this country has her first child is 25; and two out of three children younger than five are raised by parents younger than 34. While deep-seated ideological obstacles to making America more family-friendly remain, there's a new generation of parents who bear little resemblance to their baby boomer predecessors,

and they should be brought into the conversation.

These Gen Xers are negotiating their domestic and professional demands in their own ways. According to surveys conducted by the Work and Family Institute, the majority of Gen X men reject the "traditional" family model of a male breadwinner and a female housekeeper and caregiver. In comparison to dads of previous generations, Gen X fathers spend considerably more time with their children and do more around the house (although housekeeping parity remains a ways off). College-educated Gen X (as well as Gen Y) mothers seem to be rejecting the all-consuming work-centric philosophy of their own mothers, expressing less desire to move into jobs with wider responsibility. College-educated men, too, are not as hungry for more professional responsibility and

was a major factor in the squeeze on the middle class, she nodded her head in acknowledgement and shared what she thought was her similar struggle: “I know, my husband and I can barely afford the \$35,000 a year for our nanny.” Deluded into thinking she’s middle class, she clearly doesn’t understand the reality facing ordinary parents and likely doesn’t put affordable child care on the top of her reform list or the senator’s.

The last obstacle to mobilizing a strong constituency for family-friendly policies is probably the toughest nut to crack: We simply don’t value mothers’ work. Yes, Americans are clearly in favor of mothers working when it comes to subsidized care in the context of *welfare*. Most Americans

So mothers continue to take it on the chin when it comes to the epochal decision about earning and mommying. Many moms feel deep guilt about wanting to be both mothers and professionals, about the quality of child care, about what other people will think of their choices. Then there are the majority of moms who aren’t on the career track and have too few choices: They need child care because they need their paycheck. And yet the substance of our debate takes place around the polarized margins—it vacillates from the need to provide child care for welfare recipients to whether career-track moms are better off at home or in the workplace. Given the narrowness of the public debate, it’s

it-alone society certainly might rise as they scramble to finish their history assignments in the dead of night.

Political outreach also could touch the new generation of fathers who want to spend more time with their families. When I was growing up in the Midwest in the 1980s, the sight of a man pushing a stroller, let alone changing a diaper, was rare. Today, it’s not uncommon to see a dad strolling the malls with a Babybjörn strapped to his chest, or to see him sharing stroller duty. Where is Dads Rising?

The generational vacuum on work-family issues is part of the larger lack of recognition about the major economic challenges confronting this new generation. There is no AARP advocating on behalf of 20- and 30-somethings who lack health insurance at rates higher than any other age group, who are drowning in debt from skyrocketing housing costs and student debt; and who are earning less than their parents did at this age. While young voter groups have demonstrated their effectiveness in getting the under-30 crowd to the polls, much of their advocacy takes place on college campuses, where issues like tuition costs and the environment seem to be more important. In addition, the women’s organizations that have been at the forefront of the work/family battle have lost some resonance among the post-second-wave feminist generation.

A new generation of parents already embraces a healthier balance between men and women as earners and caregivers. Now they are seeking a saner division in their roles as workers and parents. If more effective political leadership made the cause more mainstream, Generation X would readily embrace a larger social outlay for child care as well as paid family leave that could reduce the conflict in their roles as workers and parents. If leadership from politicians is not forthcoming, Generations X and Y need their own movement for a family-friendly America. **TAP**

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A new generation of parents already embraces a healthier balance in their roles as mothers and fathers, and as earners and caregivers.

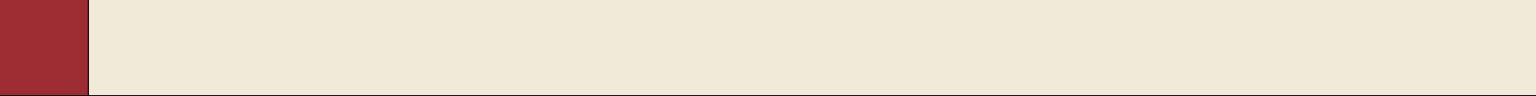
unequivocally believe poor moms should be at work—to send a message to their children that work is important—and think the government should help make sure child care is available. But that’s only when no father is present. Add a working dad to the mix, and the value of a working mom—to herself, to her kids, and to society—isn’t part of the conversation. In a 2000 poll of registered voters, 52 percent strongly agreed and 28 percent somewhat agreed that while “it may be necessary for mothers to work because the family needs money, it would be better if she could stay home and take care of the house and children.”

This enduring ambivalence among the American people about who should be providing child care doesn’t come only from old white guys who feel uneasy about the government supporting the ability for women with small children to work. Leaving your child in someone else’s care isn’t exactly viewed as the worthy thing to do in America. Many still believe the omnipresent mom is the best model for child rearing. And if that’s the ideal, then why should we spend money creating a system that’s an affront to our values?

really no surprise that paid family leave and universal child care haven’t made it to the top of the domestic agenda.

Unless progressives can build a broader coalition, it’s likely the United States will remain exceptional for not giving families the supports they need. And one of the best sources of support for that coalition would be young adults. While researching my book, *Strapped: Why America’s 20- and 30-Somethings Can’t Get Ahead*, I spoke to dozens of young parents about their experiences trying to navigate the mess that qualifies as child care in this country, a light bulb went off: Figuring out how to keep the paychecks coming in and how to take good care of their children is one of the most frustrating and financially challenging tasks for young adults in the 21st century.

If activist groups were reaching out to younger families, their pulse would come not from the professional class, but from the juggling class. They would reach the young women who are balancing child rearing, low-wage jobs, and community college classes—a group for whom the anger, frustration, and hopelessness of trying to be a good parent in this go-



Raising the Bar

John Edwards is the most populist presidential candidate we've seen in many decades. But can this tribune for the poor champion the middle class as well?

BY EZRA KLEIN

IF THE SECRET TO SAMSON'S STRENGTH LAY IN HIS curly locks, the source of John Edwards' power is his voice. Speaking in a honeyed North Carolinian drawl peppered with "sirs" and "pleases," Edwards can talk of populism and class in terms that would get most any other candidate labeled a Leninist, and yet he seems unthreatening, even solicitous. As Chuck Todd, the editor of *National Journal's Hotline*, marvels, "Howard Dean says it, and it's shrill; Edwards says the exact same thing, and you melt." The voice separates Edwards from the rest of the field, and makes him the first genuine populist in decades with a serious shot at the presidency.

Underlying the way Edwards talks, and even how he thinks, is a simple fact that is often ignored because it is so obvious: John Edwards is a trial lawyer before he is a politician. His are the highs and lows of a speaker trained on juries, not crowds; of a voice that seeks to persuade rather than to inspire. Generally, a talented politician is a masterful orator. But while a great orator seems larger-than-life, a great trial lawyer seems like he just came from your living room, possibly after watching the ballgame. And Edwards is one of the best.

For progressives, this translates into an important difference: John Edwards can speak truths about the country that the other Democratic candidates cannot. At the AFL-CIO's annual Wellstone Award dinner last December, where Edwards was being presented with the yearly decoration, he ruefully responded to a particularly powerful video of the late Paul Wellstone's fiery populism by chuckling, "I'm a southerner; we don't know how to talk like that." But as a southerner, as a trial lawyer, and as an experienced presidential campaigner, Edwards knows how to talk *about* that without marginalizing himself or unsettling his audiences. It's a difference in style that allows a difference in substance—one that could decide whether, in 2008, the Republicans face off against a Clintonian or a populist.

This would seem a time for the latter. The Democrats swept to victory in 2006 by delivering an economically populist, antiwar message. When the Campaign for America's Future asked voters to name the three most important issues of the election, "Iraq" topped the list, followed closely by "gas prices and oil companies" and "health-care costs." In 2004, 53 cents of every dollar in



Rousing the Base: Edwards addresses the DNC's winter meeting.

salary increases went to the top 1 percent of earners. Inequality has gotten so bad that even George W. Bush has given a speech decrying its rise and the attendant spike in CEO pay.

In short, it would seem an ideal moment for the class-conscious son of a millworker. But populism is traditionally a hard sell in American presidential politics, even when the timing is fortuitous, and Edwards has compounded that problem by declaring war on poverty as well. That's not exactly a proven combo for winning the nation's highest office, and the electorate may not want to hear such harangues from a mansion-dwelling lawyer worth tens of millions of dollars. But it's been a long time since a presidential campaign featured a populist as authentic as Edwards, and he's spent a long time proving his talent for winning over skeptical groups of ordinary Americans. For Edwards, those groups used to be called juries. Today they're called voters. The question is whether there's really a difference.

"AMERICANS HAVE POLITICIANS WHO COME FROM TWO PLACES," says Bruce Raynor, general president of UNITE HERE, a 450,000-member apparel and hotel union. "Either they are professional politicians—which is nothing bad—or they are rich people who

were successful in the corporate world. John Edwards made his money suing corporations. That's very different."

It's a difference Edwards' opponents have occasionally mistaken for a weakness. In 1998, incumbent Republican Senator Lauch Faircloth sought an early knockout against his neophyte challenger in North Carolina with a raft of anti-trial lawyer ads. "It didn't work," recalls Rob Christensen, a political reporter for the Raleigh-based *News & Observer*. "The trial-lawyer issue gets a lot of Republicans and conservatives, but doesn't play with voters, particularly in places like North Carolina and the South. With the low rate of unionization and state governments being controlled by Big Business, the working person traditionally didn't have a lot of say in his own fate. Trial lawyers were the great equalizer."

To better grasp the archetype, pick up any of the best sellers by Mississippi-native John Grisham: Almost all are Manichean contests pitting heroic trial lawyers and their weak, wounded clients against powerful interests indifferent to the suffering of ordinary people.

Reminded of Faircloth's attacks on trial lawyers, Edwards'

*If being a populist means standing up for people
"so they don't get stomped on" by corporations,
says John Edwards, then he's a populist.*

longtime pollster Harrison Hickman laughs. "We were very much like Br'er Rabbit: glad to be thrown into that briar patch. It lets Edwards talk about the kinds of people he represented, families and children who'd been injured in egregious ways. The challenge would always have been, in a debate: Name one of my clients who didn't deserve the award they got."

It is a failure of political reporting that those legal cases are rarely evaluated as anything but potential attack ads. The stories, people, and corporations Edwards came into contact with amounted to a searing, visceral course in old-style populism.

Think of it this way: Hillary Clinton's caution and political savvy are obvious products of an adult life spent entirely in politics, the last 15 years or so on the national stage. Barack Obama's broad appeal and talent for consensus building are not unexpected traits in a former community organizer. So what does spending decades confronting the grievous, heartbreaking damage done to individuals and families by powerful, profit-driven corporations do to a man?

"Every single day," says Edwards' wife, Elizabeth, "what he saw were good people, in great need, who were being mistreated by big corporations—corporations that knew that they had done wrong, and often insurance companies that were taking a calculated risk going to trial. ... If you took that person, a person who chose that as his life, you would end up with the politics that he's talking about today."

In 2003, when John Edwards wanted to present himself to the electorate, he, like every other world-leader wannabe, wrote a book. But his *Four Trials*, unlike most campaign tracts, doesn't say a word about his experience in the Senate

or his plans for the country. Instead, it recounts a quartet of trials Edwards fought: two against corporations, two against doctors. More to the point, it introduces four clients whom Edwards fought *for*: ordinary individuals who display heroic endurance in the face of profoundly unfair events. At the close of one wrenching trial, Edwards turns to the jury and says, "What you have been doing for the last seven weeks is you have been watching what happens when absolute corporate indifference collides with absolute innocence. That's what this case is. That is what this case is about. And that is why you are here."

In some ways, that is also what Edwards' campaign is about, why *he* is here. When we sit down for an interview, one of the first questions I ask him is whether he thinks of himself as a populist. "If I knew what that meant," he laughs, "I could answer that question." But as I start to offer a definition, he interjects: "Can I answer first, then you tell me? I don't want my answer to be influenced by the other definition. If being a populist means standing up for regular people so they don't get ...," and here he pauses, searching for the right words, "... stomped on

by powerful multinational corporations, the answer is, 'Yes.'" I abandon my own definition, which, by comparison, would seem tinny and esoteric. "The reason I wrote that book the way I did," he continues, "is I think you read that book and you know, for good or bad, a lot about

John Edwards and the way he views the world."

Edwards, to be sure, is not anti-enterprise, but his comments lack the deification of business and business leaders that so often lace elite Democratic rhetoric. This, again, speaks to background. Career politicians spend their lives raising money, not making it. As they ascend in prominence and power, their need for well-heeled supporters grows ever greater. A corporate friend is not only a good golfing buddy; he's also a financial savior, an indispensable political asset. Indeed, in such a relationship, the politician needs the business leader more than the business leader needs the politician. In politicians, it breeds an inevitable idealization of corporate executives.

Certainly this was true for another southern politician who occasionally claimed the populist mantle: Bill Clinton. In *The Survivor*, reporter John Harris' recounting of Clinton's presidency, the author describes Erskine Bowles, Clinton's third chief of staff and the man who would lose a bid for the Senate seat Edwards vacated to pursue the presidency: "A Charlotte investment banker and millionaire many times over from his business dealings as well as the family fortune into which he married, Bowles fairly boasted of his indifference to capital customs. 'I'm a creature of the private sector,' he liked to say. 'It's my natural habitat.'"

This is precisely what attracted the president. "The Clintons," Harris writes, "had organized their lives around politics, not money, yet they were fascinated by people who had made money and understood it, especially when these people were not conservative Republicans. Clinton knew he was just as smart as and usually more experienced than almost any political operative



Candidate of the 9th Ward: Edwards declares his candidacy in the backyard of a Katrina-damaged home in New Orleans.

giving an opinion. But an investment banker like Bowles—now, there was someone worth listening to.”

Edwards reveals an opposite approach. He doesn’t take money from political action committees or lobbyists, and in conversation, casually places himself in opposition to the reflexive glorification of corporate CEOs. At one point, I ask about the volunteerism aesthetic of his campaign, which plans to enlist scores of civic-minded supporters into “One Corps”—volunteers who, with the campaign’s encouragement, will fan into their communities to do public service. “This is perfectly consistent with my belief in labor unions, in the jury system, in the power of America,” Edwards says. “It’s the difference between the CEO of a multinational corporation and somebody who believes the

best of America comes from its people, not from people who are giving orders. I don’t know any other way to describe it. I really do believe that in my heart and soul, and always have.”

A story Elizabeth Edwards told me—and that John Edwards, after being pressed, confirmed—may shed some light on why. John’s mother, Bobbie, had a shop in a country warehouse outside of Robbins, North Carolina, where she’d refinish old furniture pieces that she’d bought at antique auctions. “She really could turn things that looked awful into beautiful pieces of furniture,” remembers Elizabeth. “It was hard labor, but she loved it.” John’s father, Wallace, meanwhile, had risen to supervisor of a Roger Milliken textile mill. “Now,” says Elizabeth, “the way you decide whether a plant is operating well is

what their production is, and how much of the production is wasted because it has imperfections in it—the number of ‘seconds.’ And the Robbins mill was either at the top or near the top among the Milliken plants while [Wallace] was running it—it had some of the lowest seconds. He ran an incredibly efficient plant, and actually afterwards went into business as an efficiency consultant.”

One day, Roger Milliken decided that all of his plant supervisors needed college degrees. Wallace Edwards had never been to college. “You have to know to begin with,” says John Edwards, “there’s nobody in the world I admire like I admire my father. Nobody. He’s honest and good and strong, but bleeds for people around him in a way I wish I could. I’m not him; I wish I was. I used to watch how hard he worked, and then they brought [in] this guy—‘The College Kid,’ they called him—and he just took over. That’s when my father left [the plant].”

“When he left,” finishes Elizabeth, “he left his health insurance on the table. He had a heart condition, and had [had] rheumatic fever as a child. Bobbie quit that store she loved and went to work first at the county board of elections, then at the post office, where she could have insurance. And when she went to the post office, she joined a union.”

“I’ve always said,” John Edwards told me, “if you look at my life pattern, every piece fits: coming from the background I come from, becoming a lawyer, the work I did as a lawyer, and then the work I’ve done as a political leader.”

SOME OF THIS POPULIST CONVICTION WAS OBSCURED by the occasionally Rorschach-like nature of the campaign Edwards ran in 2004. And indeed, as Edwards has geared up for a second presidential bid, observers have treated him as a whole new beast. *The New Republic*, surveying his recent focus on poverty and labor, termed him “The Accidental Populist.” *The Nation* wondered, “Who is this guy—and what has he done with the centrist New Democrat who once had Karl Rove quaking in his boots?”

Some of this goes back to tone, words, and accent. The emergence, in 2002, of a handsome, articulate, drawling southerner brought to mind another handsome, articulate, drawling southerner who actually was a centrist. But John Edwards was, and is, no Bill Clinton. Despite a widespread perception to the contrary, Edwards never joined the Democratic Leadership Council, though the organization courted him heavily. “That was not the route he wanted to go,” says Elizabeth. Indeed, all the way back in 2002, *The New Yorker* noted that “Edwards has chosen to present himself as a rollicking, full-throated, us-against-them populist.”

Edwards’ reputation for moderation was also earned by his early, unblinking support for the Iraq War. He not only backed the war; he co-sponsored the resolution authorizing force. Nor could he claim ignorance: He sat on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

“He really has to overcompensate on other issues to overcome his support for the war,” says Markos Moulitsas Zúniga, proprietor of the weblog Daily Kos. “It’s the defining issue of the decade, and he got it so wrong.”

Edwards has, to be sure, sought penance, most notably in a November 13, 2005, *Washington Post* op-ed that began, simply, “I was wrong.” Over time, he has become even more vociferously antiwar, his constant apologies serving as preamble to angry denunciations that seem aimed, in some ways, at his former self. Speaking at New York’s Riverside Church on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, from the same dais on which King condemned the Vietnam War in 1967, he lifted a phrase from King’s address for his own refrain: “Silence,” he kept saying, “is betrayal”—a line the media took as a challenge to Obama and Clinton, who, still in the Senate, retain the power to legislate against the war. It is also, however, an unintentional commentary on Edwards’ current impotence: No longer a senator, all he can do is speak.

Edwards now approaches foreign policy in much the same way he addresses economic policy: as a populist. Speaking at the Brussels Forum on Transatlantic Challenges last April, Edwards said, “Spreading democracy is not about knocking regimes down; it’s about building—building democratic institutions and communities that will protect basic freedom. Just as poverty and disillusionment isolate and drain hope from our people in our own cities, it does exactly the same thing for every person around the world who feels like they have no chance.” To Edwards, you can’t fight the war on terrorism without firing a few shots at poverty as well.

EDWARDS’ INTENSE FOCUS ON POVERTY IS, POLITICALLY, VERY different from the “two Americas”-style populism that he relied on earlier in his political career. The genius of the “two Americas” was that it drew the battle lines so smartly, pitting the overwhelming majority of Americans against a rich and parasitic elite. It was populism as E.L. Doctorow defined it, speaking for “the large middle world, neither destitute nor privileged.” Edwards identified “one America that does the work, another America that reaps the reward. One America that pays the taxes, another America that gets the tax breaks. ... One America (middle-class America) whose needs Washington has long forgotten, another America (narrow-interest America) whose every wish is Washington’s command.” Most any listener, from most any income bracket, could happily count him- or herself in the first America—the America of decent, hardworking people just looking for a fair shake.

Recently, however, Edwards has turned his focus from the large middle to the destitute. In 2005, he became the director of a poverty center at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and during the 2006 election, he spent the run-up stumping across the country for minimum-wage increases. He announced his campaign for the presidency in the mud of New Orleans’ Ninth Ward, and in April, he will release *Ending Poverty in America*, a collection of articles co-edited by John Edwards from scholars and experts on how to eliminate the scourge of deprivation from our shores.

When you talk to the Edwards campaign staff, however, you’re quickly assured that the antipoverty crusader will employ a different approach as a presidential campaigner. “It’s not a campaign strategy,” says Edwards. “It never was. It’s what I care about, and I’m going to talk about it as long as I’m breathing. But there’s a difference between being a candidate for presi-

dent and running a poverty center at the University of North Carolina. In Des Moines, [Iowa], you would've heard me talk about poverty, but you would've heard me talk about poverty in the context of what's happening in the middle class, what's happening with the growing gap between the rich and the poor, and energy, health care, American leadership in the world. You can't just be the president for low-income families."

In that spirit, the first major policy announcement of Edwards' new campaign wasn't an antipoverty plan; it was a plan to reform the health-care system. Health care is that rare economic problem that can afflict white-collar workers with much the same ferocity it directs against low-income workers. Since 2000, health-care costs have shot up an average of 10.5 percent a year, while worker's earnings have risen an average of 3.1 percent. That may be why 80 percent of Americans are dissatisfied with the cost of health care. And Edwards' plan—which ends the ability of insurers to discriminate on grounds of medical history, age, or health status; offers a Medicare-style program that all Americans could buy into; and subsidizes a significant portion of the middle class to achieve universality—should prove widely appealing.

EDWARDS SPOKE OF "TWO AMERICAS" IN 2004, AND he wasn't elected president of either. At the time, he was dogged by questions of authenticity, and his unrelenting niceness and optimism—he rarely went negative against his primary opponents—blunted the message's effectiveness. Whether his amplified appeal meets with more success in 2008 may rest on whether he's learned the lessons of 2004.

Those lessons can be summed up in one word: conviction. The political power of this was driven home for Edwards during the 2004 campaign, as the Bush team eviscerated John Kerry by arguing that the electorate couldn't really trust him. "You know where I stand," Bush joked during the election, "and sometimes, we even know where my opponent stands." You can't, of course, get Edwards to say an unkind word about Kerry. Try, and he'll just shake his head. "I've been pretty disciplined about not going back and critiquing," he'll say. I remember, though, a dinner with the Edwardses shortly after the 2004 election, in which I was struck by John Edwards' constant use of the word "conviction." It was like a murder mystery in which the traumatized witness rocks back and forth uttering the single-word clue that unravels the case.

Conviction is not something Edwards has had much trouble demonstrating. As a trial lawyer, he spent years fighting skilled corporate attorneys for the hearts and minds of juries, both sides burying their overwhelmed audience beneath mountains of highly technical evidence and testimony and experts and objections. In the end, the members of the jury, who lacked the expertise to really *know* which side was playing straight with them, had to go with their gut. And when it was Edwards sitting at the plaintiff's table, their gut tended to tell them that not only was this guy telling the truth, but that the other guys were telling particularly vile *untruths*. Not only could he show conviction; he could expose its absence in his opponents.

This campaign, Edwards' focus on poverty and populism can be read as an attempt to demonstrate his own convictions: You may not care about what John Edwards cares about, but at least you know that John Edwards cares. At the winter meeting of the Democratic National Committee, while Hillary Clinton declared, "I'm in, and I'm in to win," and Barack Obama identified "cynicism" as America's greatest enemy, Edwards pegged his speech to the question, "Why are we here?" ("we" being the Democratic Party's delegates and the 10 assembled presidential hopefuls). The answers: an 8-year-old girl going to bed hungry; a hotel housekeeper walking a union picket line; a high-school student hiding his college-acceptance letter because his family can't afford tuition; a mother mourning her son, who just died in Iraq; an orphaned child sitting in a Sudanese refugee camp; and a father trying to pay the medical bills for his child, who winds up in the emergency room because they lack health insurance—a veritable Who's Who of little people bravely battling against the vagaries of fate and economics.

Edwards' speech was, by wide acclaim, the finest of those by the Big Three (Edwards, Obama, and Clinton). The *National Journal's* "Hotline On Call" noted that it received five standing ovations, while Clinton's address got three, and Obama's generated only two. Clinton's speech offered a string of agreeable generalities crying out for a narrative. Obama's address was a more cerebral commentary on the theater of politics and the problems of apathy. Fascinating problems, both, but Edwards's intense focus on the suffering of powerless individuals made such philosophical considerations appear slightly dilettantish. In terms of simple celebrity, he clearly lacked the star power of the other two. But he explained precisely who and what John Edwards stands for, and highlighted the comparatively insufficient answers that Clinton's and Obama's speeches gave to the "Why are we here?" question (good things and hope, respectively).

"Edwards is really trying to be Bobby Kennedy meets César Chávez meets William Jennings Bryan," says Chuck Todd. "And I think that position is going to have some appeal." To win in 2008, though, convincing the majority of voters that he cares for sympathetic underdogs will not be enough; they need to believe he will stand for *them*. But if Edwards—in that unthreatening southern drawl, drawing on those years spent fighting against malign corporate actors—can convince the electorate that he will "[stand] up for regular people so they don't get stomped on by powerful multinational corporations" ... well, a lot of people believe themselves "regular people," and this is a moment in which they hunger for a champion.

"The one thing I am certain of," Edwards told me, "is that when Iowa caucus goers walk into caucus on a Monday night a little under a year from now, they will know what I stand for. They won't have any questions. They may not agree with it, but they'll know it."

His confidence is unsurprising. When small groups of Americans spend months listening to Edwards, they often end up concluding that his beliefs are exactly aligned with theirs, that his heroes are their heroes, that his enemies are their enemies. This may be John Edwards' biggest case, but it is not his first. **TAP**

How Congress Got Us Out of Vietnam

Once upon a time, Congress put an end to a bloody debacle. It can do it again.

BY JULIAN E. ZELIZER

SINCE JANUARY 10, WHEN PRESIDENT BUSH PROPOSED a “troop surge” in Iraq, the administration has responded to legislative critics by stating that Congress cannot handle the responsibility of conducting an effective war. “You cannot run a war by committee,” Vice President Richard Cheney told FOX News on January 14.

But Democrats are no longer willing to trust presidential decision making. “You don’t like to micromanage the Defense Department,” responded Congressman John Murtha, “but we have to, in this case, because they’re not paying attention to the public ...”

In the debate over whether the legislature can play a constructive role in shaping national security policy, the president’s challengers have history on their side. Congress has often played a significant, albeit underappreciated, role in wartime politics.

One of the best examples for current Democratic legislators is that of their Vietnam-era counterparts. Ironically, both the left and the right have criticized the performance of Congress during the war in Vietnam. Liberals accuse the Congress of allowing Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon to push deeper into the jungles of Southeast Asia without opposition. Conservatives place responsibility for “losing” on the Democratic Congress.

The Vietnam-era Congress certainly had many failings. Lawmakers too often deferred to presidential decisions that they knew to be flawed. They hesitated to challenge presidents directly. Democrats and Republicans took action after the fact and agreed to watered-down compromises. Most importantly, Congress never forced an immediate end to the war. To the contrary, in 1964, Congress granted the president broad authority to use force, and in the late 1960s and early 1970s it continued to fund military operations after the war had turned into a quagmire.

But compared to Congress during the presidency of George W. Bush, the Vietnam-era legislature compiled an impressive record in challenging flawed presidential decisions. Between 1964 and 1975, many legislators forced discussion of difficult questions about the mission, publicly challenged the administration’s core arguments, and used budgetary mechanisms to create pressure on the Pentagon to bring the war to a halt. A number of liberal Democrats started in the mid-1960s as some of the most vocal critics of escalation in Vietnam; by the early 1970s they were wielding the power of the purse.

Many observers have glorified the role of the media and anti-war protestors in forcing an end to one of America’s most disastrous foreign policies. But numerous members of Congress deserve equal respect, and can serve as a model for legislators who are today challenging the president.

EARLY IN LYNDON JOHNSON’S PRESIDENCY, PROMINENT Democrats privately (and to a lesser extent, publicly) challenged the expansion of America’s involvement in Vietnam. Congress created a serious political opportunity for Johnson to avoid escalation. At the same time that Johnson was hearing from hawkish advisors such as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and State Department official Walt Rostow, a number of legislators bluntly argued that his advisors were wrong. Senator Frank Church of Idaho said that sending troops into Vietnam would be a “hopeless entanglement, the end of which is difficult to see.” While most Democrats were unwilling to publicly speak against the president, many privately urged the administration to explore alternatives to escalation, including J. William Fulbright, Albert Gore, John McClellan, George McGovern, Stuart Symington, and John Sherman Cooper (a Republican). In December 1963, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield wrote Johnson that the administration should cooperate with international officials seeking to find a settlement. “What national interests in Asia would steel the American people for the massive costs of an ever-deepening involvement?” he asked. Conservative Democratic Senator George Smathers reported to the president in 1964 that he was having trouble finding legislators who thought “we ought to fight a war in that area of the world.” According to *New York Times* reporter Max Frankel, “It is beginning to look as if the Democrats plan to be their own most vigorous critics in this year’s election debate.”

The advice that most troubled Johnson came from the senior southern hawk, Senator Richard Russell of Georgia—Lyndon Johnson’s mentor in the Senate. In some of the most chilling telephone conversations from the Johnson presidential archives, Russell explained to Johnson why this war could not be won and how unimportant the conflict was to the outcome of the Cold War.

On May 27, 1964, President Johnson called Russell to ask him for advice on the “Vietnam thing.” Russell called the situation the “damn worse mess I ever saw” and warned it would lead to



The Pushback Begins: Secretary of State Dean Rusk (witness stand, left center) testifies before a skeptical Foreign Relations Committee in February 1966. Committee members include Wayne Morse (second from right), chairman J. William Fulbright (fourth from right), and Frank Church (sixth from right).

a difficult war against the North Vietnamese and Chinese in the jungles. Russell said the U.S. position was “deteriorating” and that it looked like “the more we try to do for them [the South Vietnamese government], the less they are willing to do for themselves.” Russell said Americans were not ready to send troops to do the fighting. If it came to the option of sending Americans or getting out, Russell said, “I’d get out.” When Johnson asked him what was at stake, Russell responded that the territory was not important a “damn bit” to the United States. Russell also said he was concerned that McNamara was not as “objective” as he needed to be and that he didn’t understand the “history and background” of the Vietnamese. Although Russell publicly insisted on using as much force as possible after Johnson committed the United States to the conflict, privately he continued to express his fears.

A similar dynamic could be seen in the debate surrounding the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in August 1964. The resolution granted the president sweeping authority to use military force in Vietnam and has often been characterized as the most dramatic example of Congress blindly deferring to the executive branch. The House passed the resolution 416 to 0 and the Senate 88 to 2, with Democratic Senators Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening in opposition. Still, many legislators had to be persuaded to support the administration. Johnson understood that, which is why he chose a widely trusted figure, Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright—the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, who had expressed doubts about the war—to handle the resolution in Congress.

Congress fell short in the Gulf of Tonkin debate because it

did too little, not because it did too much. Some legislators were far ahead of the administration, predicting the problems with the war, as well as the problems inherent in such an expansion of executive power. Facing an election and right-wing Republicans who were questioning the willingness of Democrats to use force, however, many members of both parties buckled and failed to act on their misgivings until later. Yet it is important to remember that the scope of the U.S. intervention was extremely difficult to foresee in August 1964 (even Johnson’s advisors did not anticipate the type of ground war on which the United States would soon embark). Moreover, Fulbright personally assured the Democrats that the president would not misuse this authority to embark on an all-out war. Johnson had promised Fulbright that if the mission changed significantly, he would return to Congress for its consent.

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution did not make a full-scale war inevitable. Following his landslide reelection in 1964, Johnson had even more political space to make a choice. Vice President Hubert Humphrey privately urged Johnson to call for a withdrawal, since 1965 was “the first year when we can face the Vietnam problem without being preoccupied with the political repercussions from the Republican right ...”

At the time, historian Fredrik Logevall has argued in *Choosing War*, “in terms of his domestic flank, Johnson had considerable freedom of action on Vietnam after the election. The political context he faced with respect to the war was a much more fluid one than is often suggested, with little or no national ‘consensus’ about which way to proceed.” Through their willingness to criticize the Vietnam hawks and raise questions about

expanded U.S. involvement, congressional Democrats had played a central role in creating this important opportunity.

But it was a missed opportunity. In the spring of 1965, Johnson decided to “Americanize” the war by sending ground troops. At this turning point, skeptical Democrats fell short by not acting on their misgivings.

AS THE WAR IN VIETNAM PROGRESSED, HOWEVER, and the military situation deteriorated, a few Democrats used the power of congressional investigation to force the administration into a contentious public debate. The most significant proceedings were Fulbright’s Foreign Relations Committee hearings in February 1966. Eighteen months after passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, Fulbright decided that he could no longer stand by the president in a war he opposed. He was worried, as were most members of his committee, that the administration’s optimistic assessments were wrong and that a huge buildup of troops would be required in the coming years. He also felt personally betrayed by the president, who had promised to act with restraint.

Fred Friendly, who headed CBS News, convinced his superiors to cover some of Fulbright’s hearings live and to preempt the normally scheduled shows (such as the popular children’s program *Captain Kangaroo*). In response, the administration scheduled events to distract public attention. The president held a summit with the South Vietnamese leadership in Hawaii the evening before the hearings started. Nonetheless, the Fulbright hearings provided the nation with the first glimpse of such administration officials as Secretary of State Dean Rusk, George Kennan, and former Ambassador to South Vietnam General Maxwell Taylor confronting difficult challenges about the war. When Rusk told the committee that, if the United States did not stand firm militarily, “then the prospect for peace disappears,” Fulbright challenged almost all of his assertions. The senator insisted that there was no need to escalate operations in Vietnam because the conflict did not involve the vital interests of America and could easily be a “trigger for world war.” The president personally called Stanton to pressure him to take the highly rated hearings off the air. CBS, also concerned about the financial cost of preempting popular shows, obliged.

Johnson came to hate Fulbright, whom he privately mocked as “Senator Halfbright.” But the hearings stung the president. Although public opinion remained in favor of the war, Fulbright emerged as a key figure in the growing antiwar forces, though the courtly Southern aristocrat had little if anything in common with the demonstrators increasingly taking to the streets. Indeed, precisely because of his establishment imprimatur, his investigations and statements helped give antiwar protest a certain degree of legitimacy. The hearings also ensured that the mainstream media covered criticism about the war. Fulbright biographer Randall Bennett Woods explained that “the February hearings, in short, opened a psychological door for the great American middle class ... if the administration intended to wage the war in Vietnam from the political center in America, the 1966 hearings were indeed a blow to that effort.” Over the next

two years, Democrats conducted further hearings, not only on the war but on such related issues as the draft.

Congress also forced the administration to deal with the budgetary consequences of the war. In this case, the pressure came from conservative Democrats. While Johnson believed he could fund both domestic and wartime spending, some members of Congress forced him to make difficult choices. In January 1967, Johnson agreed with his economic advisors to propose a tax surcharge to quell the inflationary pressures caused by the war’s overheating of the economy, and to raise enough funds so that he could continue paying for his War on Poverty initiative. But Representative Wilbur Mills, the powerful House Ways and Means Chairman, objected. Mills, a Southern fiscal conservative, insisted that if the administration wanted to raise taxes, it would also have to cut domestic spending. Mills feared that the tax reductions of 1962 and 1964 would end in the “Vietnam jungle.” According to Mills, Johnson would have to decide between guns and butter.

Because Democrats had lost 47 seats in the House, the conservative coalition had increased its strength, and Mills felt emboldened. While the administration agreed to spending cuts, it did not want to go as far as Mills did. The confrontation escalated in 1968 when an international financial crisis put intense pressure on the United States to reduce its deficit. The Johnson administration finally acquiesced that year and accepted \$6 billion in budget cuts in exchange for the tax surcharge. While conservatives were not happy with the tax hike, they were eager to curb the deficit and strike a blow against Johnson’s Great Society. At the same time, the tax surcharge “made many doves,” as Dean Rusk explained, by making it painfully clear that there were costs to fighting this war. Previously, many liberals had believed that America could support “guns and butter.” By 1968, they no longer thought so, and were willing to forego the war to save their ambitious domestic agenda.

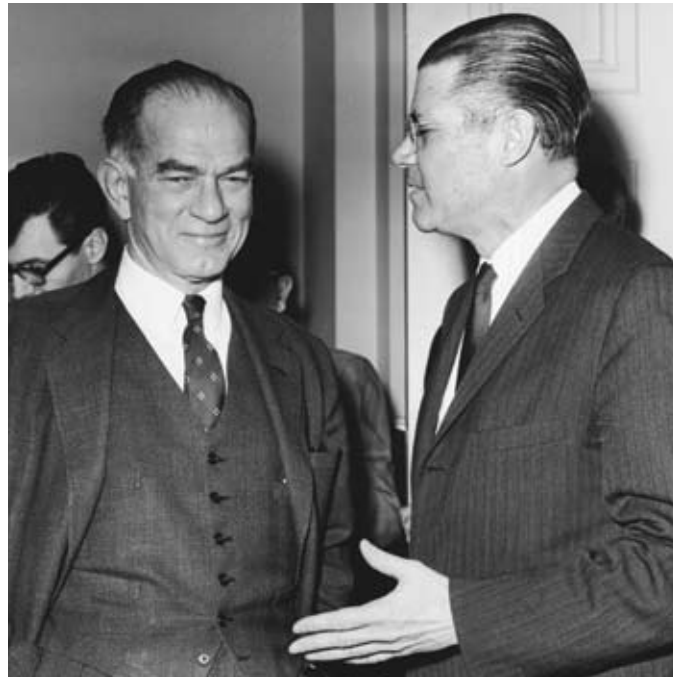
BY THE TIME RICHARD NIXON WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT IN November 1968, the antiwar coalition had expanded in Congress to include such former hawks as Missouri Democratic Senator Stuart Symington and northeastern liberal Republicans like Senator Jacob Javits. Bipartisan alliances were common in this era, since party discipline was weak and the committee system encouraged legislators to work across party lines.

In one respect, the antiwar coalition scored its most important victory when, upon taking office, President Nixon announced his policy of Vietnamization: The United States would gradually withdraw its forces from Vietnam to let the South fight the ground war on its own. Nixon’s decision was as political as it was strategic: He had become convinced that he had to end the ground war if he hoped to undermine the liberal media and the Democratic Congress. Nixon’s goal was to somehow “break the back of the establishment and Democratic leadership ... [and] then build a strong defense in [our] second term.” Initially, his strategy worked. “The president has joined us,” Church boasted, “he is now on the same perch with the doves ...”

Notwithstanding this huge policy shift—and also because it took Nixon four full years to withdraw U.S. ground forces from

Vietnam—Democrats continued to challenge the administration. Nixon's aggressive claims about executive power goaded the opposition. On June 25, 1969, the Senate, by a resounding vote of 70 to 16, passed a "national commitments" resolution that stated that the Senate needed to repair the balance between the branches of government when dealing with foreign policy. That summer, Fulbright demanded that the administration admit there was a secret plan whereby the United States would help fight any insurgency in Thailand. Under pressure, Nixon announced a reduction of the U.S. military presence there. Following a two-week trip to South Asia, Mansfield began to demand that Nixon start reducing the size of U.S. military forces in the region. Some Republicans joined in. New York Representative Charles Goodell proposed a bill that would establish a deadline of December 1970 to pull troops out of Vietnam.

On December 16, 1969, Congress finally used the power of the purse. In a closed floor session, Church and Cooper offered an amendment to a defense spending bill to prevent the further



He's Selling Me an Edsel: J. William Fulbright listens to Defense Secretary (and former Ford Motors President) Robert McNamara, 1966.

use of money in Laos or Thailand. The amendment received the support of 73 senators. Church called the amendment a "reassertion of congressional prerogatives" on foreign policy. It survived the House-Senate conference committee, and Nixon signed the legislation.

But in the spring of 1970, Church and Cooper became concerned that Nixon was planning to use military force to support General Lon Nol, who had recently taken over Cambodia in a coup. Following Nixon's televised speech on April 30, in which he revealed that he had authorized a bombing attack on Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, Church and Cooper offered a new amendment that extended the 1969 prohibition to include Cambodia.

The administration mounted an intense lobbying effort to

keep legislators from supporting the amendment. The American Legion sent letters to senators warning against such action. Historian Robert David Johnson has found that White House Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman authorized what Haldeman in his notes called "inflammatory types [such as Senators Robert Dole and Barry Goldwater] to attack Senate doves—for knife in back disloyalty—lack of patriotism." Nixon told his advisors to "hit 'em in the gut."

Fulbright's establishment bonafides ensured that the media would cover antiwar perspectives.

Following an intense seven weeks of floor debate over the constitutional balance of power, the Senate voted on June 30, 1970 to pass the Church-Cooper amendment with 58 votes. The amendment stipulated that the administration could not spend funds for soldiers, combat assistance, advisors, or bombing operations in Cambodia. To broaden support for the measure, the sponsors agreed to alter the language so that the amendment aimed to work "in concert" with the administration's policies. They also declared the amendment did not deny any constitutional powers to the president.

Nixon warned that the amendment would "affect the president's exercise of his lawful responsibilities as commander in chief of the armed forces." In contrast to the seven-week debate in the Senate, it took the House less than an hour to table a motion instructing House conferees to agree to the Church-Cooper amendment. In response, Church and Cooper compromised on several key matters, including a provision to limit the amendment to ground troops and not air strikes. They then attached the amendment to a supplemental-aid bill that passed both the House and Senate. While the authors understood that Nixon was already taking troops out of Cambodia, and that the measure would have limited effect, Church still believed the amendment would "draw the purse strings tight against a deepening American involvement in Cambodia." Congress sent the measure to the president in late December. While some antiwar critics preferred the amendment proposed by South Dakota Democrat George McGovern and Oregon Republican Mark Hatfield, which would have required a withdrawal of forces from Vietnam by the end of the next year, the passage of the Church-Cooper amendment marked the first successful use of congressional budgetary authority to limit the war.

The legislative pressure behind the amendment convinced Nixon that he would have to restrict ground operations in Cambodia and elsewhere. State Department official William Bundy recalled that "the Cooper-Church Amendment, and the sentiment it represented, continued to hang over the White House." Nixon National Security Council staffer John Lehman later said that "the impact on executive policies actually ran much deeper. It ... narrowed the parameters of future options to be considered. Everyone was aware that ground had been yielded and public tolerance eroded."

The proposals to restrict funds and force withdrawal produced intense pressure on Nixon to bring an end to the war on his own terms before his legislative opponents gained too much ground. During Nixon's first term, there were 80 roll-call votes on the war in Congress; there had only been 14 between 1966 and 1968. In 1971, Mansfield attached an amendment to three pieces of legislation that required withdrawal of U.S. forces nine months after Congress passed the legislation. The White House warned that the president would not abide by this declaration. Congress agreed to pass the amendment but only after deleting the withdrawal date and declaring it to be a sense-of-Congress resolution, rather than a policy declaration, which was stronger. While the Senate had watered down the amendment, the expanding number of votes in support of it made the administration well aware of an increasingly active and oppositional Congress.

In 1972, Church and Senator Clifford Case of New Jersey were able to push through the Senate an amendment to foreign-aid legislation that would end funding for all U.S. military operations in Southeast Asia except for withdrawal (subject to the release of all prisoners of war). Senate passage of the legislation, with the amendment, marked the first time that either chamber had passed a provision establishing a cutoff of funds for continuing the war. Though House and Senate conferees failed to reach an agreement on the measure, the support for the amendment was seen by the administration as another sign that antiwar forces were gaining strength. The McGovern-Hatfield amendment was enormously popular with the public. A January 1971 Gallup poll showed that public support for the amendment stood at 73 percent.

During the final negotiations with the Vietnamese over ending the war, culminating with the 1972 Christmas Bombings and the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973, the president knew that he only had a limited amount of time before Congress finally used the power of the purse to bring the war to an end—regardless of what the administration wanted. Indeed, to make certain that the president could not reverse course, in June 1973 Congress passed legislation that included an amendment sponsored by Church and Case to prohibit the use of more funds in Southeast Asia after August 15. Sixty-four senators voted in favor. When the House assented, its vote marked the first time that chamber had agreed to cut off funds, too.

Most importantly, Congress passed the War Powers Act in 1973 over Nixon's veto. The legislation imposed a series of restrictions on the executive branch to ensure that the president would have to consult with the House and Senate before authorizing the troops for long periods of time.

FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE DECADE, CONGRESS CONTINUED to legislate its ideas about U.S. conduct in the Cold War and to restrict the authority of the executive branch. In 1975, Congress refused President Gerald Ford's last-minute request to increase aid to South Vietnam by \$300 million, just weeks before it fell to communist control. Few legislators had taken the request seriously; many conservative Republicans and hawkish Democrats agreed by then that Vietnam was lost and that the expenditure would have been a waste.

Nor did Congress restrict its actions to Southeast Asia. Congress passed an amendment in 1976 that banned the use of funds to fight communist forces in Angola. Frustrated with these decisions, Henry Kissinger complained that "we are living in a nihilistic nightmare. It proves that Vietnam is not an aberration but our normal attitude." Angola fell to communists. Although Democrats were not happy with the outcome, most remained convinced that Americans did not want to enter another protracted conflict. One cartoonist at the time quipped: "If you liked Vietnam, you'll love ... Angola."

Congress also tackled the important national security issues of covert operations and intelligence. Hearings by Church pressured Ford into issuing an executive order that imposed restrictions on the CIA, including a ban on assassinations. Ford agreed to issue the order, rather than waiting for inevitable congressional reforms, after then-Chief of Staff Dick Cheney told him such action would protect the CIA from "irresponsible attack" and protect presidential authority. In 1978, Congress passed the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which required court-supervised monitoring of domestic surveillance operations by the federal government. The reforms were a response to revelations that the government had rampantly abused its power throughout the Cold War.

By early 1965, Congress had created a political opportunity for Johnson to pull back. He didn't take it.

In sum, Congress played a very important role in building opposition to an unpopular and failed Cold War intervention. Legislators emerged as major voices of skepticism, criticism, and outright opposition to Vietnam. They checked the hawks in the administration who refused to believe the facts on the ground. Congress was ultimately pivotal to placing pressure on the Nixon administration to end a conflict that cost approximately 58,000 American lives.

Today, members from both parties would benefit by looking back at the history of Congress in the Vietnam era. As Congress struggles over how to correct a failed military policy and how to deal with an administration that is refusing to change course, legislators need to draw on their resources—in the tradition of Fulbright, Church, McGovern, Cooper, Hatfield, and others—despite the political risks. The real risk would be for Congress to capitulate and fail to act on its disagreement with the administration. The costs of the war in Iraq have been enormous, as financial and military resources, and human lives, are drained away. If voters go the polls in 2008 with the same fire in their bellies they had in 2006, the electoral costs will also be high for incumbents who failed to act on their beliefs. **TAP**

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Culture & Books

"Brawls over art offer such high payoff... that virtually all the relevant parties have an incentive to instigate conflicts."

— PAGE 41



Make My Day, Please: The new improved Clint Eastwood embraces the other.

MEDIA

DIRTY HARRY GOES P.C.

Clint Eastwood's empathy with doomed Japanese soldiers whitewashes their barbaric warmaking.

BY CHARLES TAYLOR

AMONG FILM CRITICS, THERE seems to be a longing for a filmmaker who can assume the mantle of American master. And for many of them, Clint Eastwood is just the man. Choosing Eastwood's *Letters From Iwo Jima* as the best movie of 2006, *The New York Times*' A.O. Scott wrote that with the death of Robert Altman, Eastwood became the greatest living American filmmaker. That's a depressing prospect:

It's as if, with Altman's maverick crapshoot approach to filmmaking out of the way, American movies can return to the static genre familiarity that his films made look unutterably square.

Eastwood's films—in which well-worn genre conventions are rendered with the slow, heavy solemnity that is often taken as a signal that art is being committed—offer the comfort of seeing B-movie tropes become respectable

objects of critical contemplation. For all the talk of Eastwood's originality, nearly everything he has gotten credit for as a director has been done before, and done better, by other filmmakers—filmmakers who may have won some critical favor in retrospect, but who have never managed the transition to respectability that Eastwood has.

The moral complications that his *Unforgiven* supposedly injected into Westerns, for instance, were present in the 1950s Westerns directed by Anthony Mann and Budd Boetticher (to say nothing of the later work of Sam Peckinpah). Eastwood's lumbering, inflated *Million Dollar Baby* couldn't match the sweat-and-liniment haze of small-time boxing captured so indelibly by Robert Wise in his 1949 film, *The Set-Up*. And you can find some of what Eastwood is getting at in his currently playing *Flags of Our Fathers* (the movie that, along with *Letters From Iwo Jima*, comprises his World War II diptych) in Mann's *Men in War* (1957) and in Samuel Fuller's grungy combat films like *Fixed Bayonets!* (1951).

What distinguishes those earlier films is the terse, economical direction that harnesses the no-nonsense energy of B movies to moral and emotional complexities. By contrast, Eastwood simply inflates B-movie convention and makes them solemn and humorless, qualities that rarely result in good art, and almost never in good American art. In front of the camera, Eastwood can show glints of dry wit, especially in the affectionate, pleasantly laid-back *Space Cowboys*. With a group of old pros—James Garner, Tommy Lee Jones, Donald Sutherland—Eastwood relaxed into *Space Cowboys*' wily gags about aging. He played the sarcasm of a man comfortable with his age who resented being treated like a decrepit coot. And in his botched but still enjoyable film of Michael Connelly's

thriller *Blood Work*, he put a sly caper on a lifetime of characters who put themselves in harm's way. Neither The Man with No Name nor Dirty Harry ever performed anything as risky as the moment in which Eastwood's character, a detective who's survived a heart transplant, bit into a Krispy Kreme doughnut with nary a whit of guilt or fear.

But as an American director, Eastwood shows next to no grasp of the casual, disrespectful, smart-assed tone that characterizes our national style. And that suits the take-your-medicine ethic that, for many film critics, has become the mark of worthiness in a filmmaker.

Flags of Our Fathers shows all the Eastwood defects. It's clumsy, overlong, earnest—and a structural mess. But far more than Steven Spielberg's glorified boys' book adventure *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), Eastwood's *Flags* gets at the way that the horror of battle is co-opted on the home front—as if to soften, or even erase, the experience of the men who actually fought. But the rapturous critical reception accorded to *Letters From Iwo Jima* seems to have deleted *Flags of Our Fathers* (which received

which has tried to avoid the mistakes of its predecessors.) But while we can see the soldiers serving in Iraq as pawns of an administration that lied in order to realize a neoconservative fantasy, we may not be able to get beyond seeing them as the ones who are carrying out the policies we find so repugnant. And so, just as the Indians in the Westerns made in the late 1960s and early 1970s became stand-ins for the Vietnamese, the Japanese soldiers in *Letters From Iwo Jima* become honorary Iraqis. A movie that attempts the honorable task of humanizing the Japanese in the way this one does, that comes along when our national policy is characterized by lies and carnage, can play into the notion that if America labels someone the enemy, we should never quite believe it.

This is what David Ansen of *Newsweek* appears to be saying when he writes of the film, “It looks beyond politics into the hearts and minds of the men we needed to call ‘the enemy,’ and lets us see ourselves.” It's one thing to go beyond politics, but that is not the same thing as going beyond historical fact. We didn't need to call the Japanese the enemy; they

rodents for proof. It doesn't follow, however, that the Japanese reputation for viciousness was entirely due to Western prejudice. Certainly not according to the Chinese who survived the rape of Nanking or the invasion of Shanghai. And it may be that the racist way in which the Japanese were depicted, as well as the pacifism their country has practiced since the end of World War II, has made people reluctant to condemn the racism and imperialism and brutality of their methods in a way those same people would not hesitate to do with Germans.

But Eastwood has replaced the stereotypes of the Japanese as vermin with benign stereotypes familiar from other war movies. There is the tough but essentially decent commander, General Kuribayashi (played by Ken Watanabe); the Olympic athlete (Tsuyoshi Ihara) who arrives on horseback as if war were still a 19th-century romance; the poor working stiff (Kazunari Ninomiya) who only wants to return to his wife and child. The extremists, like the few who show up now and then to countermand Kuribayashi's more sensible orders with some suicidal plans, are presented as exceptions. Although we see Japanese soldiers being shown a red cross so they know to fire on American medics trying to evacuate the wounded, damned if we see them actually firing.

This is how, in the *Los Angeles Times*, Kenneth Turan can claim that Eastwood “underlines the futility that so many have to die because of the misguided ideology of a few in leadership positions.” Can anyone who has read anything about the Pacific War buy this guff? On Iwo Jima, where the Japanese were badly outnumbered, more than 20,000 Japanese soldiers were killed. You don't persuade entire armies to embark on a 40-day suicide mission with only “the misguided ideology of a few in leadership positions.” Only a Neanderthal would doubt that Japanese soldiers were as scared and homesick as Eastwood depicts them. But an army doesn't engage in the almost unthinkable barbarism the Japanese did throughout their theaters of war without a widespread, unquestioned belief that

Clint Eastwood's stoic, anhedonic Americana has connected to the national disgust with George W. Bush's disastrous Iraq War.

respectful, unexcited notices) from the collective critical memory. In *Letters*, Eastwood has hit the critical jackpot. His stoic, anhedonic Americana has connected to the national disgust with George W. Bush's disastrous Iraq War. And it's hard to avoid the suspicion that the critical hosannas are evidence that at this moment in our history, many critics—and other Americans who consider themselves progressive—may think it's a sign of national self-absorption to show more sympathy for American troops than for the people the troops are fighting.

Which is not to imply that as a nation we are near to a replay of the demonization of American soldiers serving in Vietnam. (Some of the credit for that can go to the current antiwar movement,

were the enemy—because they bombed Pearl Harbor, because they pursued a vicious method of combat based on the belief that the weak were not worthy of being considered human, because their prison camps violated every principle that had been laid down for the humane treatment of prisoners of war.

Of course, one of the noblest things art can aspire to do is to make us feel a common humanity with people we've regarded as less than human. And in *Letters From Iwo Jima*, Eastwood has set himself a particularly tough task. It's true that it was easy for us to dehumanize the Japanese during WWII because they were not white Europeans—you need only look at the wartime film and cartoon caricatures of the Japanese as

the enemy should be shown no mercy and that death was preferable to dishonor. In his expansion of Henry Steele Commager's *The Story of World War II*, the historian Donald L. Miller writes of the Nanking Massacre, "To the entire world, the Japanese served notice that this was the new meaning of Bushido, the medieval code of the Japanese warrior that originally called for compassion towards one's enemies."

Apart from a few fleeting references to Americans being "weak-willed," that is the national mentality that Eastwood utterly fails to examine. In *Flags*, he is mercifully discreet when he allows the look of disgust and shock on Ryan Phillippe's face to register the discovery of a comrade's mutilated corpse. But *Letters* is filled with evasions that support not art but the conflation of many things, and the hedging of moral responsibility. Should you confront this film with any facts about how the Japanese conducted combat and treated POWs in WWII, you won't have to wait long for someone to say the magic words "Abu Ghraib."

We are far from the national self-loathing of the Vietnam and Watergate years. But we may be at the point where some Americans believe that we have no right to even mention another country's wartime brutality. That approach makes nonsense of history. But if comparisons are going to be made, let's be clear: The disgust Americans have expressed over Abu Ghraib would not have been possible—indeed, would have been unthinkable—in World War II Japan because that country's most brutal acts toward its enemies in combat, toward its prisoners of war, toward the people it subjugated by conquest, were considered honorable and heroic and glorious: a perfect expression of everything Japan stood for. Eastwood's tepid, whitewashed treatment of those horrors suggests that people have chosen to ignore Japan's sins as a way of doing penance for our own. **TAP**

Charles Taylor is a columnist for The (Newark) Star-Ledger. His writing has also appeared in The New York Times, Newsday, The New Yorker, the Los Angeles Times, and other publications.

BOOKS

MUST TRADE KILL EQUALITY?

AN ECONOMIC STRATEGY TO ADVANCE OPPORTUNITY, PROSPERITY, AND GROWTH BY ROBERT C. ALTMAN, JASON E. BORDOFF, PETER R. ORSZAG, AND ROBERT E. RUBIN The Hamilton Project, 28 pages, free at Hamiltonproject.org

HOW WE COMPETE: WHAT COMPANIES AROUND THE WORLD ARE DOING TO MAKE IT IN TODAY'S GLOBAL ECONOMY BY SUZANNE BERGER Currency/Doubleday, 334 pages, \$27.50

THE EUROPEAN ECONOMY SINCE 1945: COORDINATED CAPITALISM AND BEYOND BY BARRY EICHENGREEN Princeton University Press, 495 pages, \$35.00

IN CHINA'S SHADOW: THE CRISIS OF AMERICAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP BY REED HUNDT Yale University Press, 200 pages, \$26.00

THE WRITING ON THE WALL: WHY WE MUST EMBRACE CHINA AS A PARTNER OR FACE IT AS AN ENEMY BY WILL HUTTON Free Press, 421 pages, \$28.00

EGALITARIAN CAPITALISM: JOBS, INCOME, AND GROWTH IN AFFLUENT COUNTRIES BY LANE KENWORTHY Russell Sage Foundation, 232 pages, \$32.50

INEQUALITY AND PROSPERITY: SOCIAL EUROPE VS. LIBERAL AMERICA BY JONAS PONTUSSON Cornell University Press, 242 pages, \$19.95

MAKING GLOBALIZATION WORK BY JOSEPH E. STIGLITZ Norton, 358 pages, \$26.95

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

IMAGINE A MODERN DEMOCRATIC country that balances dynamic private business with effective social investments. This nation has progressive taxes to finance its generous public outlays, and regulations constraining private capital for the common good—labor laws, environmental standards, rules protecting investors and pensioners. The citizens believe, with good reason, that this balance makes their economy not merely more equitable but also more efficient. To create that balance took a century of popular political mobilization, punctuated by depressions and predations that undercut the credibility of private business and free markets. It also took a lot of trial and error as well as revision of economic theory.

Now imagine that the country's business leaders propose to exempt its poorest provinces from the entire extra-market apparatus—no social protections, not even democratic government. Presumably, the lower social costs would attract industry and promote growth.

Citizens object that we have already had this argument, and the mixed economy won; allowing privileged businesses in backward provinces to despoil the environment and exploit workers will lower standards generally. But, asks business, don't you care about the poor? Indeed we do, respond the citizens, but if you corporate leaders truly care about equity, you will support consistent social protections and reject a race to the bottom.

Such an extreme proposal would not be taken seriously by any democratic nation. But it is happening globally. As we become an integrated economic system, many newly emerging economies are largely exempt from the rules of modern managed capitalism, while their exports undermine its norms. So must we constrain free trade to save our own mixed economy? Can we devise trade rules to help poor people in both poor countries and rich ones? There is no more fierce debate dividing center-left from center-right—and the debate ramifies along sometimes improbable lines, with lib-

eral economists such as James Galbraith invoking Third World development and opposing the “protection” that other liberals such as Jeff Faux view as a necessary defense of managed capitalism.

The debate traces a fault line between the congressional/labor wing of the Democratic Party, exemplified by Senator Sherrod Brown, and the party’s executive/business wing, personified by Bill Clinton and Robert Rubin. It frames the argument between the Economic Policy Institute and the new Hamilton Project. To the center-left, deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement are less about trade than about helping U.S. manufacturers outsource production to platforms that lack even America’s relative weak social protections. China’s admission to the World Trade Organization, absent any enforceable commitment to respect basic human and worker rights, must undermine wages and social standards at home. Likewise, successive trade rounds are mainly about protecting global property rights, while allowing business to outrun hard-won social rights.

By contrast, the Hamilton Project contends that with more dynamic social assistance for people dislocated by trade, we could have both economic security and efficiency gains of trade. Representative Barney Frank offers a more explicit bargain: freer global trade in exchange for business support of social programs such as universal health insurance and enforcement of the right to unionize.

COULD SUCH A BARGAIN WORK? THE European experience holds instructive and paradoxical lessons. Europe has twice the trade relative to gross domestic product as the United States. If the American center-left is correct and trade corrodes the welfare state, Europe’s social model should be collapsing. But Europe, despite its death notices in much of the American press, is doing surprisingly well.

Jonas Pontusson’s *Inequality and Prosperity* suggests that recent market liberalization (of which trade is only one element) has only slightly increased Europe’s income inequality. And the most

comprehensive welfare states are Europe’s best performers. In Pontusson’s account, the European welfare state has had to work more creatively to keep offsetting market-generated inequality, but though Europe’s entire social model was given a premature burial in the late 1970s and 1980s, Europe bounced back surprisingly well and with little sacrifice of its social protections.

Pontusson’s exemplary book is rich in both data and narrative. He carefully differentiates the variants on Europe’s model and anatomizes the continuing political and fiscal strains. Much of the success of social Europe, especially Nordic Europe, he points out, reflects its labor-market policies, which produce a skilled and competitive workforce. Despite the high wages and social protections, the most advanced welfare states do not have job shortages. Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland have a slightly higher ratio of working-age population employed than the United States does.

As for wage equality, it was actually slightly better in 2000 than in 1980 in Norway, Finland, Belgium, and Germany, almost identical in Denmark, and a little worse in Sweden and the Netherlands. The United States was already far more unequal than Europe in 1980, and that gap has dramatically widened over the past two decades. Meanwhile, the U.S. lead over European productivity has continued to narrow. Challenges to Europe’s social model remain, Pontusson concludes, but they are far from insurmountable.

Complementing Pontusson, Lane Kenworthy’s *Egalitarian Capitalism*, a little heavier on data and not quite as strong on policy analysis, definitively concludes that equality needn’t compromise economic growth. Referring to the same time period, the 1980s and 1990s, he writes, “There is no apparent relationship between income inequality and growth in either direction during those two decades.”

What, then, of the contention that trade kills equality? Though European political intellectuals still worry about whether its social model can survive, trade is not their prime concern. The Europeans worry about demographic change (more retired people to be sup-

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ported by a dwindling workforce and flat or declining birth rates); immigration (unassimilated groups consuming a disproportionate share of social outlay and undercutting local support for welfare spending); and persistently high unemployment among the young (suggesting a welfare state of insiders and outsiders). To the extent that trade is a concern at all, there is more anxiety about competition from the former Soviet bloc nations—German cars produced in Slovakia and Polish plumbers in Paris—than about low-wage Chinese or Indian exports.

In his encyclopedic treatment, economist Barry Eichengreen's *The European Economy Since 1945* recounts how western Europe shifted from an overly state-directed and bank-led system of economic reconstruction that worked superbly in the quarter century after World War II ("coordinated capitalism") to a more dynamic system with greater market discipline—but without scrapping its social institutions.

Despite great skepticism and scorn and many bumps along the road, the European Union's single-market project and later its single currency have substantially succeeded. Eichengreen observes that by conventional measures, Europe's GDP per capita "has been stuck at barely two-thirds of U.S. levels" for three decades. But as a careful economist, Eichengreen adds that measured as output per hour worked, Europe's labor productivity is now almost 95 percent of U.S. levels, and Europeans, Eichengreen points out, have far more leisure time than their American counterparts, as well as lower rates of infant mortality, poverty, and violent crime. Eichengreen concludes by observing that financial globalization and technical shifts will intensify pressure on Europe to become more like the United States but that the legacy of business-labor-government tripartism and the welfare state, rooted in both social democratic and Christian Democratic values, "display remarkable continuity."

PARADOXICALLY ENOUGH, EUROPEAN success in reconciling a left-ish social market economy with increased

trade would seem to vindicate the centrist Hamilton Project—just buffer trade with social measures, and you can have both. But Europe does not just compensate losers. It is an entirely different model of capitalism rooted in a different politics, with extensive wage regulation as well as expensive social income. Continental Europe spends roughly 15 percentage points more of GDP on public social outlay than we do—about \$2 trillion a year by U.S. standards.

Despite death notices in the American press, Europe is doing surprisingly well in defending its social bargain and its standard of living.

So, yes, relatively free trade can coexist with greater equality and economic security—for only \$2 trillion a year! Obviously, nobody on the Democratic center-right—indeed, nobody in the Democratic Party—is proposing anything like that. In fact, the Hamilton Project, obsessively concerned with deficit reduction, is coy about whether it is proposing net new social outlay at all.

And there may be more to Europe's defense of its model against global laissez-faire than just wage regulation and social spending. Europe seems bolstered against the downward pressures of trade in other, more subtle ways.

Suzanne Berger's superb *How We Compete* is the latest product of the MIT Industrial Performance Center's ongoing study of comparative capitalism. A sequel to the influential 1989 report by the late Michael Dertouzos et al., *Made in America*, Berger's new book is co-authored by a team of 13 scholars who looked in detail at more than 500 international companies. Berger and colleagues found that there is no one best way to compete globally. A firm's business strategies reflect both "the institutions and values of the country in which the company was born," and the legacy of its interaction with customers. In a new world of modular, fragmented production possibilities, different companies, faced with similar business challenges, pursue different strategies. A strategy built mainly on low

wages, Berger concludes, is a loser. "The activities that succeed over time are, in contrast, those that build on continuous learning and innovation."

Although there are variations even among multinational corporations based in the same country, European and Japanese multinationals tend to work harder to keep more of the good jobs at home. As an export region with a net trade surplus, Europe does remarkably well for a place with an expensive currency and

high wages. Europe's system of corporate governance, its embrace of industrial policies, and its social partnership with labor seem to reduce the vulnerability of Europe's social model to low-wage imports. European business is as global as its U.S. counterparts but may also be more tacitly nationalistic. The EU used to be disparaged by American free-market conservatives as "fortress Europe." In the best sense, it has lived up to that billing, extending social standards as it widens and deepens and providing a haven for social-market capitalism on one continent.

It remains to be seen how China's increasing exports will affect Europe's high-wage society. But until America gets more serious about both social outlay and a healthy form of economic nationalism that creates and keeps more good jobs at home, trade with low-wage mercantilist nations like China will continue to be either a source of our economic insecurity or an all-too-plausible scapegoat.

CHINA POLICY IS WHERE THE TRADE debate is most vivid and contentious. The critics see a nation that not only drags down U.S. wages but also steals U.S. industrial leadership with statist policies that plainly violate the trading system from which China benefits. The free-traders insist that by importing China's goods, which are pro-



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One useful short book by Reed Hundt, *In China's Shadow*, embraces elements of both views. For Hundt, China challenges U.S. industry to become more productive and American public policy to invest massively in education, training, research, and technology. But Hundt pulls no punches on the multiple ways that China subsidizes industry and steals intellectual property, in violation of the norms of the WTO. The United States, it would seem, needs both to compete more shrewdly and to hold China to symmetrical rules.

A rather surprising exponent of the benign view of China is Will Hutton, former editor of the London *Observer*, author of several good books on political economy, and a leading voice of Britain's moderate left. In *The Writing on the Wall*, Hutton has little patience with

benefits China gets from its many partnerships with Western companies and doesn't address whether China lowers wages in the West, though, as a Keynesian, he does call for increased Chinese domestic purchasing power.

"One way or another," Hutton writes, "China's economic model is certain to begin to change sometime in the next five to 10 years." And eventually, China's unstable situation will compel the Chinese to embrace pluralism and civil society. In this transition, China "requires our understanding and engagement—not our enmity and suspicion."

Hutton's book is a prodigious achievement of research and reporting, but the reasoning of its conclusion is circular. "Because China must change," Hutton declares, "it will." But, as James Mann suggests in his new book, *The China Fantasy*, extracted elsewhere in this issue, that assertion is a premise, not a demonstrated fact. China has continued its odd (and stunningly successful) hybrid far longer than most China experts thought possible. The two books

Will China change because it must? It has maintained its odd—and successful—hybrid far longer than most China experts thought possible.

American push-back against China. He argues passionately that a convergence of China's political-economic system and that of the liberal West is both imperative and inevitable.

Hutton's book is a well-researched and finely narrated report on how the Chinese hybrid economy has produced growth rates of 10 percent a year. But Hutton's bet is that China's improbable "Leninist corporatism" cannot last and that its instability is more of a threat to the West than its low-wage mercantilism. The book is rich in insights about how China's economy operates and why, in his view, it is living on borrowed time. Most Chinese enterprises answer ultimately to bureaucrats and sacrifice productivity. Endless lines of credit from the state keep losing enterprises afloat. Hutton's exhaustive treatment downplays the

share roughly the same publication date, so Mann cannot have read Hutton, but *The China Fantasy* reads almost like a line-by-line rebuttal.

There is no better rendition of the two sides of the China argument than the Hutton and Mann volumes. One awaits the live debate. And though Suzanne Berger is not a Sinologist, her work helps put theirs in context because the larger debate is not just about China but about the interaction and coexistence of distinct brands of capitalism.

PROponents of freer trade invariably use the most destitute nations as poster children for their brand of laissez-faire. Surprisingly, there is little discussion about strategies that might promote a social brand of capitalism in both the developing South and the

advanced North. One exception is Joseph Stiglitz's *Making Globalism Work*.

Stiglitz is that rarest of critics, a mainstream, Nobel-prize-winning economist who served at the highest reaches of government, took careful notes, and came away a trenchant critic of the system he was recruited to promote. Unlike the caricatured "protectionists" of the debate, Stiglitz bends over backward to be a globalist and a passionate promoter of Third World growth. This is the third in a series of Stiglitz's non-technical books challenging market fundamentalism as bad for both the developing South and the advanced North.

Having begun with that premise, he devotes most of the book to a critique of how the current brand of globalism tilts the rules against poor nations and in favor of multinational investors, corporations, and banks. He is a scathing and well-informed critic of "corrupt privatization" and the abuse of intellectual property protections at the expense of local agriculture and public health. He calls for debt relief, respect for diverse models of development, more legitimacy for social protections and investments, and "a fairer trade regime." By the latter, he means that the West should remove its remaining barriers to trade from the Third World, such as its protection of agriculture. In this view, he sounds almost like the WTO's promoters of the aborted Doha Round, but he criticizes the actual bargain proffered by the West, which would have reduced some subsidies but made poor countries even more vulnerable to imported speculation and instability.

For all his critique of laissez-faire and his very explicit embrace of managed capitalism, Stiglitz comes out as largely a free trader. He even includes a summary of the enduring virtues of comparative advantage. He does support universal environmental regulation, but not the global labor or social standards promoted by the American left.

AT THE END OF THE DAY, DAVID Ricardo's view of the mutual benefit of trade is just an extrapolation of Adam Smith laissez-faire, which famously

cited the mutual gains of specialization in a domestic economy. Ricardo simply substituted England and Portugal for Smith's butchers trading with pin-makers. But managed capitalism has a different logic, predicated on more than a century's evidence that efficiency itself requires social intervention. Yet the challenge of extending the regulations and social investments of managed capitalism to the entire globe, where there is no sovereign, poses a huge institutional

challenge as well as an uphill political battle.

Business has tried, with mixed success, to make protections of intellectual and financial property universal. Advocates of universal standards for the environment, labor, and public health have had far less success. Defending managed capitalism on one continent, within one democratic polity, may be the best available second best. The book on how to do it globally has yet to be written. **TAP**

BOOKS

HOW AMERICA DOES ART

VISUAL SHOCK: A HISTORY OF CONTROVERSIES IN AMERICAN CULTURE

BY MICHAEL KAMMEN Alfred A. Knopf, 450 pages, \$35.00

GOOD AND PLENTY: THE CREATIVE SUCCESSES OF AMERICAN ARTS FUNDING

BY TYLER COWEN Princeton University Press, 196 pages, \$27.95

BY PAUL DIMAGGIO

LIKE ALMOST EVERYTHING ELSE about democracy, there is little agreement about what it means for the arts. Is democracy a matter of providing access to the best or about recognizing the value of diverse cultural traditions? Does it mean giving the public a say about public monuments and outdoor sculpture or letting the market decide (one dollar, one vote) which arts will prosper? As these new books by Michael Kammen and Tyler Cowen show, democracy can mean all of those things. Americans disagree not only about the arts, but also about what role they ought to play in our public life and what role our public life ought to play in them.

Of the two books, Kammen's is the better read. *Visual Shock* leads us through debates about public monuments in the 19th century, contention over artistic modernism in the 20th century, arguments about murals and other public art from the Depression through the 1990s, and struggles during the long 1960s over political art, the commercialization of the art museum, and the impact of identity politics on visual culture.

Some tensions—concreteness ver-

sus abstraction, Americanism versus Europeanism, the beautiful versus the realistic—are persistent. Others reflect such recent trends as art museums' drive to fill galleries, the increasing value of scandal for marketing in a crowded art world, and the difficulty of sequestering potentially offensive artworks from the potentially offended.

Yet for all the disputation, Kammen notes how often Americans take provocations in stride. Even at the height of the "culture wars," Robert Mapplethorpe's homoerotic photographs aroused Cincinnati's county prosecutor only after being displayed without incident in Philadelphia and Boston. An exhibit of flag art failed to inflame conservative Colorado Springs before raising hell in Phoenix.

The real mystery may be why dust-ups are not more common. Brawls over art offer such high payoff to base-rallying politicians, artists seeking name recognition, museum directors eager to boost attendance, and movement groups for whom one direct-mailed picture is worth more than a thousand words that virtually all the relevant parties have an incentive to instigate conflicts even when they don't have their hearts in it.

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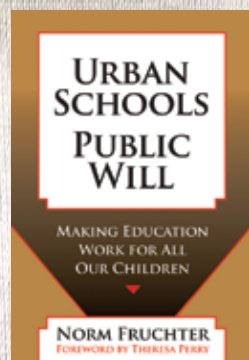
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In early years, professional groups of artists or architects were at the center of many controversies. Since the 1930s, conservative social movement organizations such as the American Legion and the American Family Association have been more prominent. A drawback of Kammen's focus on cases is his neglect of the substructure out of which multiple controversies sprout. Kammen quotes Hilton Kramer frequently but doesn't mention that Kramer's journal, *The New Criterion*, owes its survival to more than \$8 million in funding from conservative foundations. Bill Bennett and Lynne Cheney's regimes at the National Endowment for the Humanities gave institutional ballast to conservatives' "march through the institutions." And the Mapplethorpe and

early 1900s. We also do not hear the voice of John Cotton Dana, who castigated his art-museum peers in the 1920s for their "undue reverence for oil paint," or that of the Brooklyn Museum's Philip Youtz, whose first act as director in 1934 was to remove the building's classical stairs. Indeed, in an otherwise superb chapter on public sculpture, there is no mention of Philadelphia's quarter-century-old controversy over the disposition of a statue of *Rocky* donated to the city, evidence that class conflict persists in the politics of art.

Tyler Cowen's *Good and Plenty* focuses on the bright side of a system that he believes "encourages artistic creativity" and "keeps the politicization of art to a minimum." (Kammen's readers may

All funds have strings attached. The healthiest systems are those in which artists can choose the most congenial strings from a variety of options.

Andres Serrano scandals erupted when they did because the Republican Party's ascendant right wing used the National Endowment for the Arts to embarrass the first President Bush.

A central theme of *Visual Shock* is that patterns of struggle reflect cultural democratization—of subject matter, of artists' access to the public, and of the public's access to artists. I am not so sure. Classicism's surrender to aesthetic realism represented progress toward Walt Whitman's "Democratic Vistas," to be sure. But was pop art's move from abstraction to representation democratic? Kammen suggests that it was. But as long as soup cans were more about flatness and theory than about lunch, the artistically uninitiated were liable to feel more mystified than empowered.

Although Kammen treats identity politics masterfully, he gives short shrift to battles over class. His chapter on art museums says nothing about the debate over the Metropolitan Museum of Art's dress code, the Boston Museum's flight to the suburbs, or the struggle over the proper role of educational casts (and of interpretation more generally) in the

wonder about the latter assertion.) Cowen argues that government support for the arts should, first of all, decentralize creativity and enhance diversity and, second, satisfy the demands of the public for prestige. The American system, he argues, accomplishes both by directly supporting the consensually excellent but targeting the bulk of its efforts toward indirect and decentralized forms of assistance.

Good and Plenty has some significant virtues. Cowen takes a broad view of arts policy, pointing out that the official U.S. system of arts support—the federal, state, and local agencies that make grants to nonprofit cultural organizations—is but the tip of a much larger iceberg, which includes tax expenditures (revenue foregone due to the deductibility of charitable contributions), support for higher education, and intellectual property rights. He also takes a broad view of the arts and culture, including within his compass the media, Hollywood, and the recording industry. The book provides serviceable accounts of government arts programs, indirect arts support, and copyright in the digital age



Rocky Horror Show! After a long fight, populists finally win a big one as workers re-install a statue of Sylvester Stallone as Rocky in front of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, September 7, 2006.

that readers unfamiliar with these topics will find informative. Perhaps most important, Cowen's instincts are good. He recognizes that all funds have strings attached and that the healthiest systems are not those without constraint, but those in which artists can choose the most congenial from among a variety of constraints.

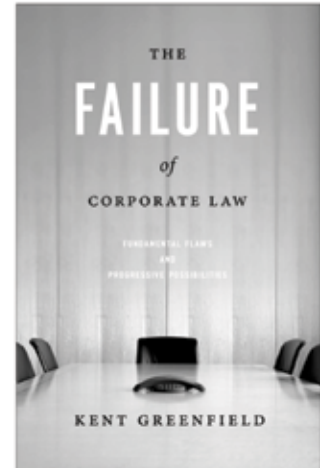
But if Cowen ends up in more or less the right place, the route is circuitous. The analytic argument is flawed by a chronic tendency to conflate key concepts (for example, decentralization with diversity, prestige with legitimacy). Some assertions—that the NEA supports jazz just to be politically correct, and that live theater is more popular today than it was two decades ago—are neither plausible nor defended with evidence.

Cowen fails to confront the principal dilemma of decentralization. Support

through the tax system is politically palatable but profoundly regressive because government matches gifts from the tax-paying wealthy at a higher rate than it subsidizes donations from those of little means. The progressive solution, providing the charitable poor with compensatory subsidy, would level the playing field. But this proposal has never received much support because few progressives would like the kind of culture that such democratization would foster. Reading Cowen and Kammen together, one may conclude that, where cultural policy is concerned, a limited and contentious democracy is the worst of systems, except for all the others. **TAP**

Paul DiMaggio is professor of sociology at Princeton University and research director of its Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies.

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Canoeing Life's River

BY JEFF FAUX

I GREW UP IN AN URBAN WORLD OF CONCRETE AND asphalt. Nature was a few weeds sprouting up from sidewalk cracks in August. Summer camp was for rich kids. So I spent a lot of time dreaming of living in the wilderness, fueled by images from James Fenimore

Cooper—the buckskin-clad deerslayer paddling down rivers, hunting, fishing, and fighting bad guys. Most kids saw their first car as a ticket out of the neighborhood. I dreamed of owning a canoe.

It was a long time coming. I spent my first decade as an adult fighting a war on poverty and against a war in Vietnam. Then, burned out after the 1972 defeat of George McGovern, I joined other despairing lefties to find hope in rural life. I cashed in everything and moved my family to a run-down blueberry farm in Maine.

One spring day, a neighbor told me he was selling his canoe. The canoes of my childhood fantasies were birch bark; this was 16 feet of banged up fiberglass. But it was \$60, with three paddles and a patch kit thrown in. The day after I bought it, with my (now ex-) wife in the bow, I confidently pushed out into the seemingly friendly rippling current of a local river.

Having paddled canoes in my dreams for years, I never considered that it might actually require some skill. Happy as a clam, I splashed from one side to another, the canoe zig-zagging down the now accelerating river with an increasingly terrified woman in the bow. When we hit the first set of rapids, the canoe dipped sideways, swamped, and dumped us into the current. We scrambled on to the shore, and watched the river break the canoe into pieces—

paddles, sneakers, and lunch sailing downstream. The river fiasco was not the cause of my later divorce, but neither was it very helpful.

A few weeks later, a Maine friend taught me the J-stroke, the maneuver that allows you to control the canoe from one side. It transformed my life. I quickly bought another canoe, went on to master the cross-stroke, the back paddle, and how to ferry across a strong current. I learned to read the river—the inverted v that tells you where the rocks are, the difference between a patch of foaming water that is benign and one that will suck you under, and the way a slight alternation in the water level can turn a safe passage through the rocks into a disaster.

Heaven became a canoe trip with one of my sons or buddies, camping along the way, paddling silently with the current, flushing ducks and skittish deer, letting the hard edges of political and personal life soften in the music of the wind that gradually fades into an ominous hiss of big rapids downstream.

Just above the whitewater, you go ashore to make your plan. Then comes

that moment that you push off into the current—no turning back, no one to call time out if you've forgotten something. The canoe speeds up, and you are hurtled into a foaming blur, desperately dodging previously unseen rocks that rise like giant teeth to chew you up, your mind a blank except for one simple phrase—"keep paddling." And finally you clear the last set of rocks, soaking wet and exuberant.

Eventually, coming to terms with my essentially urban nature, I moved back to a big city. But my romance with the canoe remained. The images of my childhood fantasies evolved into river metaphors in my speech and writing: I insist that I am in the political mainstream, just a little further downriver than most.

Once I ran some rapids with a grizzled New Hampshire man to learn the technique of turning into the calm eddies just behind the big rocks. After he explained the plan for a particularly rough stretch in front of us, he added: "Running whitewater is like life. You can point your canoe downstream, close your eyes and hope that you make it. Or, you can plan ahead—go from safe spot to safe spot—and be in control."

But once in the river, the current was so strong that we missed the first eddy and spun helplessly and hair-raisingly backward down the rocky channel.

Miraculously the canoe missed all the boulders and did not swamp.

"Like life," shrugged my backwoods guru after the river had unceremoniously deposited us in the calm water below the rapids, "it's better to be lucky than good." **TAP**

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